# The Long Journey

## Fire & Ice

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THE LONG JOURNEY

Parts One and Two

FIRE AND ICE

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# THE LONG JOURNEY

## FIRE AND ICE

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## THE PLOT

*To the north-east of Sealand the long promontory of Kullen thrusts out from Skoane into the open sea, where the Sound passes into the Cattegats a broken rocky outline which has a strange look to one accustomed to the lowlands, taking his thoughts back to other epochs. It is an ancient line, which seems to resemble an upturned face with vague, eternal features, the face of Time.*

*The Sealander of a thousand and two thousand years ago saw the same profile; at the foot of Kullen old fishing sites of the Stone Age have been found; the existence of our earliest ancestors was bounded by the same horizons as ours to-day. Kullen as we see it has been crushed into shape by the ice.*

*But before the Ice Age, in an earlier period of the earth's history, when the northern zone still possessed its warm forests, there were mountains in Skoane, volcanos, whose eruptions have left traces like the streaks of ashes in the brick-earth of the island of Mors, which is an old sea-bed of the Tertiary Age. Infinitestimal marine creatures deposited their shells, the imperceptible accumulation of thousands of years, until they formed strata as high as hills; the sea has disappeared and its bed is stratified—so long ago is it since that hour-glass ran out. But still those streaks bear witness with the clarity of a petrified instant to the ancient volcanic eruptions: veiled halos round the sun and mighty opal sunsets with an atmosphere full of dust, inconceivably long ago. The dust fell on the sub-tropical forests at the foot of the volcano, and a hairy being up in the trees after fruit marvelled at the flames in the air and*

*ceased chewing an instant: what frightful man of fire could that be up in the sky? He wagged his long jaws and got smudges of dust on his nose, for there is a fine layer of dust on fruit, leaves and everything, he gets it on his fingers and it grates between his teeth. This is Man, and the tree beneath him stands in the Garden of Eden.*

*Kullen as it is now is like the empty site of a vanished building, the root of a mountain. When great summer clouds pile themselves dome-like over the Sound and up over Sweden, they form the outline and the peaks of a mountain-chain which once loomed here as high as they. In the light midsummer nights, when a thunderstorm beleaguers the sky and the lightnings flash out from a world of clouds like the ghosts of fires in heaven, one seems to see an immense cone astride over half the horizon with its summit crowned by lightning and with a pillar of smoke reaching up towards the moon—this is Gunung Api, the Source of Fire, the Father of Fear—but also of loving-kindness, for at his foot the man of the woods received the gift of fire and became human, with every possibility in germ, and terror in the depths of his soul.*

*Here in warm forests but in a northern latitude Mankind began its long journey. And the memory of an existence in perpetual summer lives again in the innermost consciousness of all later generations, like a buried heritage of the soul, which grows with the soul and passes into ideas—imagined worlds more and more beautiful as the human extends its sway within the once unconscious creature of the woods; and from an inherited memory arise the legends of the Garden of Paradise, the Tree of Life, Happy Isles somewhere or other in the ocean which, still spared the debasement of the world, are a refuge for the Blest; finally the idea of spheres in Heaven itself, where fallen humanity will recover its happiness—all obscure memories, transfigured in the light of desire, of the Lost Country, growing and shrinking with the swing of the seasons be-*

*tween winter, which drives out hope, and the brief northern summer, which kindles it again and calls up visions of promise deep down in the soul.*

*In winter, when thick banks of cloud heavy with snow shut out one side of the sky, with the sun low down on the other like a distant refracting disc of ice, we are reminded of the Ice Sheet which once lay right across Northern Europe, gaping towards the south with cliffs hundreds of feet high and miles wide and with deserts of ice on its back which extended to the Pole; nothing passed there but freezing hurricanes; but in the wet, slushy lowland below the edge of the ice-sheet the reindeer splashed with broad hoofs and the mammoth felt its way among the rocks with pounding feet; the roving man, long-haired and benumbed, sought refuge in caves, or hollows in the foot of the ice-sheet from which rivers rushed forth; squadrons of calving icebergs floated out into the Western Ocean.*

*When at last the ice was melted and had retreated towards the Pole it had ground the mountains of Skoane off the face of the earth, right down to their roots, and had deposited them as shingle in the Baltic; centuries of torrential rain—the Deluge—furrowed the tundra, and to the cold land that was exposed when the mills of the ice had ceased, man returned and began to learn in the school of adversity the elements of a new kind of life—though the memory of life's carefree dawn was never lost as a race inheritance.*

*So great are the contrasts that have formed man's nature. But not all were thus formed. The Ice Age marked the division; it was the cause of the parting of mankind on its journey into two distinct roads, since one body remained in the North and took up the struggle with harsh conditions, became transformed, grew in humanity inwardly and upwards; while the rest turned aside from adversity and fled instead of growing; they lost themselves to the southward, followed the warm climate and continued to*

*be the naked jungle folk they were in the beginning; even to-day their descendants live in their primitive state in the tropics.*

*The old warm forests of Northern Europe were razed by the ice, like the volcanos of Skoane; but man retained the fire, the hearth. In time the Northerners had new forests to dwell in, the cool leafy forests of the North; in their shade and in constant mists our ancestors grew up. A firmly rooted but profoundly restless folk; time after time, in prehistoric and historic days, the forgotten tradition of the Lost Country, still persistent in their blood, drives the Northerners from their wintry dwelling-places towards the South and brings them to prosperity in warmer climates. But as Northerners they are lost in their new home; they become absorbed in other peoples and lose the germinating power of their nature, which is bound by their destiny to the North and to a beneficent yearning to leave it. This is the history of the Migrations, of the Vikings, of the Normans. A primitive instinct finds vent in voyages: the forests change into the Ship.*

*Old Northern forest myths soon condensed to a universal image, the world-tree Ygdrasil. The childhood of the race and all that it absorbed in its native land, together with the craving for an outlook upon the wide world, the spirit of the race, seeks a form in Old Northern poetry and may be summed up, with a leap through time, in the old fragmentary saga of Norn Guest, who was himself imagined as a gatherer and hoarder of the ages.*

*In him as a figure the Northern spirit yearns beyond the North. He outlives his generation and seeks it in the Land of the Dead. North and South, which since the Lost Country have been sundered worlds, begin to come together again. Cimbrians and Teutons move southwards in Norn Guest's footsteps, and the first clash takes place between Northern "barbarians" and the nations of Antiquity. Later, when Christianity begins to penetrate to the North, it*

*meets the people streaming southward; the Christian belief in immortality directly revives the memory of the Lost Country: from this union of South and North springs the most beautiful myth of the Middle Ages—the Virgin Mary, Goddess of Spring, the soul of the Northerner and the art of the Ancients in one, blossoming into its highest consummation at the Renaissance.*

*The ash Ygdrasil spreads beyond itself. In the Middle Ages it rises into a greater image, which combines with religious symbols and finds its expression in Gothic art: the Cathedral. A migration checked for the time leads to expansion in the domain of the soul; thus the aspiration of the Northerner gathers and transforms memories of the youth of the race and Christian symbols into a work of art, as the snail builds up its shell from its body: the Forest and the Ship become the Church.*

*With the voyages of discovery the primeval dreams force themselves to the front again, seeking their embodiment not in Heaven, in another life, but, with a certain impatience, in reality, on earth, in distant lands: the Church changes back into a ship.*

*Columbus seeks the Kingdom of Heaven and finds the savages of Guanahani. The Northern soul in its complete development here for the first time meets again its origin, primitive man; the Lost Country is confronted with the Tropics. The symbol is lost; but in place of it mankind enters the New World. The Ship is once more Forest, earth. The ring is complete.*

*It is an imaginary ring; perhaps it has come about of itself as a shadow of the curve within which an individual human life begins and returns to its starting-point. Unless we have a form we cannot surveys things that are dispersed in time and place without any known plan. Outside our circle the world may be viewed in many other ways, more accurately and more completely. Here at any rate one fixed point has been chosen from which the up-*

*ward march of humanity is viewed. Within the circle as it is laid out, with the building that has been raised upon it—a work of art in its way, this too, I suppose, which does its best to shape the materials at its disposal; and with the life of a work of art, which lasts only until the mind has created new ones—within this circle "The Long Journey" is to be read.*

# BOOK ONE
# FIRE

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# I

## GUNUNG API

AMID the forests rose a mountain spouting fire, with its scarred black head reaching above the clouds and with palms growing at its foot; this was in the warm ages when summer was still eternal, before the Ice came.

In the daytime the volcano sent a pillar of smoke up into the sky, vast masses of vapour which blended with the highest cloud-summits, miles up; but at night it smouldered like a huge bloody throat gaping over the earth, and from time to time it flung flames and glowing rocks up towards the moon. This was Gunung Api, the great Thunderer, the Father of Earthquake and of Fire.

For long ages he stood there in airy solitude, chewing the fire within him, with now and then a quaking and a subterranean rumbling as though the mountain had a quiet joke all to itself. Very seldom did Gunung Api reveal himself; he surrounded his privacy with a world of cloud, wrapped himself in vapours and slumbered.

On starry nights Gunung Api might cast the gloom from his countenance and blow off ashes into the abyss of space, cooling his crater and his lava breast in the ether; and then a mighty cone was outlined against the night with its base spread over half the horizon and its summit aspiring to the zenith; this was Gunung Api baring himself to the firmament and giving it a view of his size. And the stars spread out their bright hosts before him; the Milky Way turned hovering beneath the topmost roof of the nocturnal heaven, the moon rose round, its pale disc sailing through

the night; the Pleiades aired their dewy web on high; slowly the whole heaven revolved, showing its radiance from every side.

Then Gunung Api would send out sulphurous clouds and illumine himself with lightnings in all his immense nakedness, uncovering his long steep shaft, scored and blackened as he was from head to foot; and the lightnings would show up the rough clefts in his body, the primeval forest beneath him, hundreds of leagues of lowland on every side with a mighty river winding through it all, and in the distance the ocean; all this lay below him and was altogether puny; verily he was no mean wart upon the earth!

But the stars kept silence and blinked, all of them together, as though a keen cold wind were circling through space.

Gunung Api surrounded his head with electric storms like a crown of many colours, and the heavens answered again in a ghostly hush with the northern lights. Thus Gunung Api and the firmament would take each other's measure in the noble silence of the night. Such Powers apply themselves to contemplation alone, without waste of words.

But at last the stars pale—and was not that a laugh from Gunung Api?—there is a rumble miles below the surface, and Gunung Api opens a rift in his side and puffs out his gaiety in steam. A shower of sparks shoots out of his crater; Gunung Api cannot quite suppress a sort of cough, and it shakes his foundations a little—oh yes, the stars! he has every respect for them; they are of course innumerable, but small!

In a little while the dawn takes fire, the sky swings up from the east with an almighty flush, the young herald of the day refreshed by sleep; and long beams of light spread fanwise over half the heavens; a great event is approaching, dawn is here, the daylight mounts, the sky bursts into flame, and out of the east leaps the Sun. . . .

But Gunung Api has already turned his back on the

battlefield, he is busy gathering mists about him; one thing at a time. The day for those who like it, but Gunung Api for his part has buried himself in a cloud-burst; he flashes savagely through the murky air and lets go a landslide, shaking pumice-stones and streams of muddy water from his flanks.

And then Gunung Api keeps quiet, as long as it suits him, with his mantle of cloud up over his brows, asleep.

## II

## THE FOREST OF CHANCE

WHENEVER Gunung Api dozed for a while the forest crawled far up over his breast, and when he awoke again it was there with trees a thousand years old, harbouring all manner of beasts; Gunung Api yawned and spilled over a stream of lava, sent a wave of his fiery breath down into the valleys; and then everything died. The birds burst into flame in the air as they flew and turned to spots of fire which went out and sank to earth as scraps of cinder; lakes and tarns boiled up, fizzed off in steam and sailed towards the sky as balls of cloud, leaving charred fish lying on their black, smoking beds; for miles around the whole forest was at once fire and flame and the next moment nothing but a heap of red-hot ashes. A shower of stones followed the fire; day vanished in primeval darkness. And when Gunung Api's eruption was over and he was once more cooling his sooty cone in the starlight, a desolate waste of sulphur and tufa lay as before for miles around his foot where the forest had crept up.

Gunung Api is dreaming. The lava sinks from his crater down to the ancient lakes of fire imprisoned in the depths. Here a confined and fluid mass is in motion, torrid memories of a flaming ocean of fire which once freely encircled the globe. Alas, times were not what they had been! At first the fire had only had to contend with a few scattered lumps of slag, solidified islands in the flaming ocean; but they had grown into continents, and the continents adhered the whole way round, until the fire was shut in. And

when some of the glow had left the earth's crust, immense floods of rain fell and formed the seas upon the earth; once more there were billows, as in the days of the fiery ocean, but what a difference! Gunung Api's fire delights in chasing back to the sky in the form of steam all the water it can reach, but that is not much. When the seas had descended out of the air, the blue sky appeared; this was the morning of life upon the earth. And when the seas had cooled, there came life in them; out crept the creature, the earth fermented and formed mould. Herbs wantoned with the sun and with the rain, the enemy of fire; of this was born the forest. This came about slowly, in ages unnumbered, and during all that time the fire had been shut in, only finding vent now and then through Gunung Api's mouth, when it laid waste as far as it could reach. But its range was not as great as it fain would have had it. This clammy wet life multiplied upon the earth, assuming one form after another; the forest spread, the earth showed green—well, there it was!

But what if fire one day regained its freedom? What if the earth split open—yes, split, became fluid again, melted, breathed fire, turned again to a billowing ocean of fire as in the beginning of the ages, chased water out into space, dissolved white-hot in its own conflagration, reposed in itself for eternities, once more a dazzling universe of fire! Ho! O!

A light cloud of fire rises from Gunung Api and settles in a ring on the mountain's head, like the sacred halo upon the brow of one who dreams; Gunung Api is dreaming.

Meanwhile the forest has begun again from the beginning at the foot of the mountain. First it sends out lichen and moss over the rocks, then its other modest outposts, herbs and shrubs, until a thicket is formed and the trees begin once more to shoot up on high and grow strong. Birds and beasts return with the forest. Thus Gunung Api and the forest carry on their duel.

But down on the lowlands beyond the range of the volcano the primeval forest spread over a whole continent from sea to sea, compact league after league and without bounds, one tree with its branches locked in the next. Great lakes there were in the forest, and rivers made their way through it, but the trees came right down to the brink, wading out on prop roots as far as they could find bottom; deep in the forest were glades, far-reaching steppes even, swamps, tablelands, pastures—but beyond them again were dense immeasurable woods; it was one forest over the whole earth.

Such were the almighty forests on the earth before the Ice Age, in Europe, through Asia and Siberia, arctic America and Greenland; boundless on every side, over every country, round three continents and the whole northern hemisphere the forests extended, entirely untouched, left to themselves and subject to no law but wind and weather, their own growth and the mercy of sky and earth. So far might an animal roam; and so long might it be on the way, each new brood advancing through thousands of generations, that the last descendants would come through the forest as quite different animals from those that had begun the journey.

It was the forest of change. It grew from year to year but changed in its growth through the ages. It had adopted the primitive forms and was reaching out towards other new, unknown futures. The simple plants of vanished ages found a place here and developed according to their nature, the soul of a warmer time; dark conifers stood in the heat fermenting with fecundity and sweating resin; their thick juices were distilled from baking sunshine, tepid rain and the volcanic soil and smelt of a younger earth, but the forest had room for them. The plants of a yet earlier time, those that formed the vast steamy forests of the carboniferous age, could not hold their own, they had had their time; and yet the fern and

the horse-tail grew in the forest; the forms that were extinct as trees still kept their place as plants.

Camphor and cinnamon trees, palms and plantains, and bread-fruit trees grew in the northern forests; they stood there bathed in sunshine and alive, with their tops full of incense and their roots down in the warm ferment of the swamp; they have since withdrawn southward to the tropics, but at that time conditions in the forest were elastic enough to include them too.

With special efforts the forest provides for the future —a new life within itself which is to form new forests: the foliage trees. A slender, delicate tree appears, young as yet and tentative, but destined to become the oak. Other nascent trees, with a strange coolness and habits which the old evergreen trees had never thought of, flock together in little groves and form troops, making themselves at home where they find a place: the young ash, the rowan-tree, the lime; they have a fine sense of something new in the air, and the air will one day make them strong, when even the mighty camphor-tree will have to give up and go. It is the *Seasons* that are beginning quite imperceptibly to influence the forest. The elements affect it, sun, wind and rain, and less stable things than these, but not a whim of the weather is lost upon the forest; in the sun it grows green, before the wind it bows down, in the rain it stands still and drinks—forest so long as it lasts, and nothing is to be depended upon, but through one hazard and another it does last and the forest remains standing. But it does not remain the same.

In itself it only persists through change. An impulse that passes from one form into another dominates the forest, this it is that makes it forest. What else has made the trees into trees than growth in a higher sense, in the family and beyond the individual? The trees get their stems from growing in company. For originally they

were all herbs in proximity to the earth, but by the power of the forest, by standing many together and stretching up to reach past each other to the light—the source of life above just as much as the earth from which they draw their nourishment below—they have developed great firm trunks from what in the beginning were only green stalks; over a hundred feet they rise with a fathom's girth or more at the base, and at the very top are the leaves, the lungs of the tree which must have light and air so that the whole tree may live; here it flowers and bears fruit; so mighty a framework does the tree build up to carry its leaves and fruit, the original herb, up into the light. Not every herb has become a tree, for they do not all stand in each other's light, even if they are many together: the grass stays upon the ground, and yet the bamboo has become a tree. Nor is every plant in the forest finished, what they are not, they may become; the plantain is in an intermediate stage, a plant-like growth with a green stalk which still only consists of sheaths, one within another, but has the dimensions of a tree. Even the cabbage has a stalk and is on the way to becoming a tree.

Adversity and luxuriance together make the forest. It is a vast community growing together; the trees stand greedily spreading their roots in the fetid warmth of the soil, watered by tepid downpours and baked by the sun; they grow up against one another, upon and above one another and into one another, they must come up, every tree stretches itself to bring its top up into the light, to win power and if possible shut out its neighbour; there is not only so much space gained but also the prospect of slaking its roots in the store of strength returned to the soil when the neighbour has gone out from lack of nourishment, so there is a twofold gain in being uppermost. The life of the trees is a pitiless race, but whichever it is that comes out on top, the forest survives. The *forest* is precisely that which survives.

The strongest? Is it always strength that is uppermost? Ask the forest; it will answer with a silent explanation, showing what takes place, for instance, between the giant tree and the climbing plant. This is a duel in the forest. Two plants have challenged each other, one of the giants of the forest, with a vast lofty trunk, a fathom thick at the base and anchored to the earth with huge roots, hard as a rock and tough in its wood, tried by many a cyclone—and a poor little thing down in the dark shadow of the swamp, with no body at all, a colourless stalk creeping on the ground without the least hope of ever reaching above the jungle by its own power.

The fight begins, and the colossus grows, adds yearly ring to yearly ring so that it splits the bark, shoots up further yet through the thicket with its mighty column and spreads out its branches at the very top like a dome crowning the roof of the forest. Here it swings up in the daylight, a friend of the sun, the dew and the breezes, and from the green tents of its top the trunk looks like a huge pillar, losing itself far, far below in the dark well of the swamp and the underworld.

But down here the climbing-plant is already at work. It stretches itself, a mile in length though no thicker than a finger; it needs a stem to reach the heights, it knows that, and what readier way is there than to worm one's self up the stems of others? This is what the climber does, it borrows the giant's strong straight mast and crawls up it, not making direct for its goal but in a spiral; as it climbs it strikes its suckers in and nourishes itself with the tree's juices. At last without cost it reaches the light at the great tree's top, and then it spreads in its turn, entangling and overshadowing the giant's foliage with its own hungry leaves, putting out flowers, great gaping funnels with style and filaments projecting like live coals far out of its throat, flame-coloured and overpowering of scent—the underworld that has burst out up in the sunshine and airs its stark

nakedness. And the great trèe is overshadowed, the long stealthy serpent has actually overcome the giant. When the mighty trunk has fallen the liana remains hanging corkscrew fashion amid the wild growth; of the giant there is nothing left but the idea that may be formed of its girth and length from the empty voluptuous curves of the liana. The forest maintains silence, it exists for the sake of the summits; not even strength, but the result, determines who and what shall live. Such is the cruelty of the forest.

But is it not at the same time generous? The forest nourishes itself only to be able to nourish. Is not the vine a climber? From the corpse of the colossus it has slain it hangs out its grapes, a swelling world of sweetness. Every tree gives, offering its fruit even if there is no one to take it; the coconut palm leans down with its ovary of nuts on the end shoot, from the tiniest up to huge ripe nuts, a whole gamut of fertility; the bushes vaunt their berries, turning them red, food and gaiety at once; even the modest grass conceals a kernel within its prickly ear. The flowers open their calyxes and consummate their lives in perfume, perish in colour; they offer their honey to the bee, which in return helps them to bear fruit—a secret pact which, so long as it endures, will fill the summer with the scent of honey and the humming of bees.

Reciprocity makes the forest rich, this is its law of life; the plant with the reddest fruit gets its seed diffused, unless like the burr it simply hangs on; but a feast to which all who will may come is the more handsome way. For the sake of reciprocity a plant transforms itself, as it does in order to exist; they go to the greatest lengths in order to meet each other, beyond their own nature, if need be, and into another; thereby the forest becomes more manifold. The apple-tree and the briar are both roses, but with no little difference; one form has developed itself from the other, the apple-tree from the briar, by shedding its thorns

and turning the little dry stone-fruit into an apple; from prickly bushes growing together in a thicket and armed against their surroundings there has come a fine tree growing in the open which offers its fruit with outstretched arms.

When the apple-tree is in bloom it summons the bees to a banquet, and then each tree is like a white-clad dome full of cool sweetness, sunshine and shade, and the whole tree is one single note of all the humming swarm, a miracle of light, the sphere of blessedness. But when the fruit is ripe it seeks the earth, in dark nights, with an audible fall; the hoof of Time smiting the earth, with its warning that summer is past.

When the first apple-tree bloomed in the primeval forest it told of eternal summer; but when the fruit fell to earth, it knocked to announce the first autumn.

Upon the plains within the great mother-forests stood the apple-tree rounding its fruit to fit the human hand; it offered man of its superfluity and has been taken into his gardens.

For man had his origin in the great northern forests before the Ice Age, the wild joyous forests where existence was bound by no laws but Nature's own, and none knew want.

Man came out of the primeval state together with the beasts, shared their life and became transformed with them. In a forest in transformation, with herbs on the way to become trees, one species growing beyond itself and into another, the beasts found sustenance and changed after their manner, one leaving another and on the way to become a third; and as the foremost creature among the beasts, though by no means the strongest, but the richest in possibilities, Man arose.

How he tamed fire is to be related here.

## III

## THE MAN

DOWN in the valleys around Gunung Api dwelt the Forest Folk, entirely free from care and without thought for the morrow; the forest served them out of its abundance. They had no dwellings or fixed places of abode but moved about from one wild orchard to another, according as the fruit ripened and offered itself; when they had cleared one place or amused themselves by shaking all the fruit down, they went off with noisy mirth to another and shook the trees there.

But although they were always on the move they had, unknown to themselves, regularly recurring habits; they wandered in a certain circle, within a definite territory, and in the course of time left their tracks, formed paths which those who had any memory recognized from one visit to another; unconsciously their life was directed by the forest and the year; those who remembered the paths began also vaguely to notice the aspect of the forest and of the year each time their steps brought them back to the same place.

A vast landscape was spread out at the foot of Gunung Api, on one side a gradual slope lost itself in the chain of forests of the lowland, on the other the ground rose to the first spurs of Gunung Api; the land was neither plain nor forest but both, open country and groves alternating, here and there solitary trees, elsewhere thicket, dense, well-defined woods surrounding a river which flowed through them; rocks and ravines giving place to level pasture; in this park-like country the Forest Folk moved up and down, now by the river, now into the jungle, then among the trees

and then out into the open or up the mountain, always something new but within certain bounds, which were so wide that they were not aware of them; all the rest of the world was open to them, but there were reasons for their remaining here. Far or near, Gunung Api's smoking head or the cloud that concealed him was always above their horizon, shutting out the sky on that side; behind the volcano they had never been.

Moreover they had not the country to themselves, for there were all the animals that roamed the forest and the pastures with which they were familiar; with the beasts the Forest Folk lived on the same footing of conditional peace as the beasts among themselves. With some of them their relations were those of irreconcilable hostility, as with the tiger; but it was not man that had started that war: the forest people raised a warning shout as soon as it was seen and were indignant in their very vitals because it did not respect the peace. Before the elephant they lay flat, literally, in the most profound subjection; he was to *see* that they would not stand up against him: down with you, every man, when Father Elephant shows himself; and the great pachyderm had to step carefully to avoid treading on the courteous people in the grass. The tiger shows an evil grin, at a distance; he too has respect for the elephant but cannot refrain from hinting at the unfairness of the match between himself and the pachyderm; it is a low trick of the elephant to wear pegs in his mouth and cover himself with slates. With other animals of medium size, such as wild cattle, deer, horses and other herbivorous beasts, man lived on peaceful and neighbourly terms, but had a tendency to tease and make fun of them, knowing them to be quiet; a frequent sight was a flying beast and a man hanging on to its tail, with unexplained object; on such occasions the human herd raised a special uproar, shrill peals from open throats; it was grand fun to see an honest brute put to shame by one of their like.

With the wolf their relations were strained, but they had an understanding with the dogs, which run down a hare when in a pack and fawn so nicely when they are single. All poultry was left out of consideration, though their eggs were not despised. Animals of small size were frightened to death for fun, and everything not too big to be held in the hand was counted as food, from grasshoppers and beetles to worms and mice. It was not every one whose eyes were good enough to distinguish between a berry and a thing with legs, a bug or a spider—a matter of taste; on the other hand, not many would confuse the durian fruit with a hedgehog. Finally, as for the tiniest winged creatures in nature, flies and gnats, they were only a nuisance. Such was the attitude of the Forest Folk towards their fellow-creatures.

They themselves were regarded by the other animals with wonder more than anything else. Most animals went about in herds, and men did so too; but their herd was always restless, jumping about early and late; if you saw the grass stirring out on the plain and figures leaping out of it with wild gesticulations, you knew that was the men; if the trees on the edge of the forest swayed as though struck by a whirlwind, they were disporting themselves again; they were also to be known afar off by the noise they made; there was a continual chattering in the herd, never ceasing, every kind of jaw-music, sharp, long drawn-out and deep; long rolling harangues, grunts, and snarls, warning roars and a concert of howls from the youngsters, puling and wailing, and now and then a chorus of laughter, that strange many-voiced neighing peculiar to the human herd, which usually betokened an accident of one kind or another.

Most conspicuous among them was the leader, an old individual, usually of bigger and heavier build than the rest and with a terrific head of hair; from him the chattering proceeded like a prevailing wind, he led the laughter, and if any one gave a piercing shriek it was from one of his

pinches. Wherever the herd wandered he was at its head.

The leader, then, was one of the oldest, who had experienced and could put two and two together when the same thing recurred; as was natural, he led the way and gave the direction, cleared the path of obstacles, discovered snakes and gave the alarm, smote his breast in warlike fashion when enemies appeared, and was the first to fly.

The Forest Folk were divided into many herds, each with its leader; they despised and kept clear of each other, but if their paths unavoidably met the result was a single combat; each leader dealt his chest resounding blows and abused the other for half a day on end without budging from the spot, until something or other occurred to separate them, such as a fall of rain or the total hoarseness of one of the parties; such occasions served to show which of the herds possessed the greatest staying power in its leader. The number of tribes was unknown, but among them all was one whose leader had shouted down *all* the leaders without exception in all the other tribes and had always had the last word. He had the most fearsome head of hair in the whole forest and was known to all; they spoke of him as *The Man* and he had no other name; he was always to be found in the best places of the forest together with the herd that followed him; every other herd gave way before his name. The groves were cleared of men, if any were there, as soon as he appeared; he seldom saw his fellow-men except from behind and on the run. He had the most dreaded vocal powers in the forest.

The Man awoke with the sun and shook the dew from his shoulders; far and near among the groves the wild cocks were crowing. With a crash of their wings the pigeons flew out of the highest trees, busy from early morn; the lowing of the wild cow woke echoes in the vales, and between whiles it was so still that the humming of a single bee could be heard. Steamy vapours rose from the grass;

out on the plain among scattered trees a herd of giraffes was wading through the morning mist. The peacock spread his tail before the rising sun. The great forest rose like a blue domed wall, but a cloudy outline dominated the whole land, Gunung Api hiding himself in the sky and showing his summit in glimpses through the thick air at a giddy height.

Gaiety everywhere and the song of birds, joy over the new-created day; but the Man was sour, he yawned wide, showing the depths of his throat, shuddered and yawned again, fretful in his soul from evil dreams, empty but with no appetite so early, thoroughly miserable and very, very dangerous.

Those about him knew this from experience and it was very quiet round the tree where the family had rested; the mothers stilled their little ones with silent gestures; a little group of women, every one of them scarred or lame, stole about and put their heads together, occupied with the service of the Man but doubtful whether he could be approached. Fruit had been gathered before daybreak, everything was ready—but would he eat, what would he like, and when would be the right time? An attempt was made, a courageous old individual hobbled up with a freshly gathered pine-apple and made luscious eating motions with her lips to see whether the Man would accept it; she got the prickly fruit flung back at her head and retired bleeding to whisper with the others; evidently pine-apple was not what was wanted.

Another veteran went up: a freshly opened cocoanut, flowing over with juice and kernel; she munched quite irresistibly with her lips, the Man could not help eating, the nut was *so* toothsome and it had cost her a whole morning's toil to open it, an endless filing with a sharp stone to get through the fibre to the nut; but the Man knocked up her hand and sent the nut with milk and all flying into the air. She went back shaking her head to the other women, in

distress: he would not eat! Breakfast was tried in vain, grapes, berries; the old women changed their tactics and sent up younger temptresses with the food, not for the sake of their own personal safety, but on the chance of its succeeding; the young girls tried their luck, shedding the light of their own irresistible charms over the food; they lay in the dust, but the Man took no notice of them, and real terror began to spread through the whole tribe—what if he would never eat again? What was to be done? Without doubt the whole world would perish, heaven and earth would fall, if he refused to take nourishment and hold them up. Well-a-way! the women sat down and began to weep quietly.

A last attempt was made, the prettiest thing in the whole tribe, a perfectly fresh, sweet young girl, almost a child, was sent up with a bunch of grapes, which she timidly held up to the Man's lips. He turned his mouth away, and then she made the blunder of persisting, offering the grapes a second time—the next instant she was seized, and the Man gave a loud roar, maddened by such officious impertinence; without getting up he bent her double by the force of his arms alone, held her and, with bristling hair and beard and grinding jaws, bethought him how she should suffer and remember it. Then deliberately he passed his hand to one of her feet and twisted it in the ankle-joint, a whole turn—there, he flung the shrieking girl from him—there, now she could go lame the rest of her days!

The victim was carried off, and the group of women breathed again. The Man had found vent, he was himself once more; they knew him, now he would surely eat, heaven and earth were safe this time. And they were not wrong; as soon as the Man had had his exercise his appetite came back; he deigned to devour a brood of nestlings, alive and warm from the nest, and after this appetiser fell greedily upon anything that was offered, swallowed a mass of dainties, slobbered up the milk of one cocoanut after

another, and belched—a good sign; the women nodded to one another with emotion: he's feeling good; and gradually with the sense of fulness he began to look round at the women, one after another, in a different way. They dropped their eyes, sank on their knees, and each one thought to herself: I wonder how I am looking. None had yet had time to finger her hair away from her eyes or to smooth out her limbs nicely.

The Man got up, threw out his chest, took a good look at the sky, and gave the recognized signal for free merriment—instantly taken up by the young men all around, who had kept very quiet all the morning. The brows were working above the Man's gleaming eyes and the women hung upon his countenance, jumping about with shrill bird-cries when his brow was clear, shrinking up ready for a quiet retreat as soon as clouds collected on his forehead.

Soon they broke up, the Man leading, with plans for the day unknown to the rest; next the young men, all intent upon obedience, and last the women, with children in their arms, very happy, sticking green leaves with spittle on their bumps and wounds of the morning. Last of all came the young girl who had had her foot put out of joint, supported by two women with old-standing lameness; they knew what it was.

And so the tribe is on the trail the livelong day, chewing all the time, more or less; wherever they go some food offers, and everything has to be tasted. Everything is turned over, examined, taken in the hand and sniffed, put to the lips and tried by a bite; some swarm up the trees and heave the fruit down, break off branches and get scratched; waterholes are explored, rocks climbed, enemies encountered and a concert of righteous screeching set up; little domestic squabbles arise and die down, and before the end of the day the troop is in quite another country, only remembered by the old leader and perhaps a few besides. The Man's well-nigh supernatural knowledge is shown by

his tracking out a bed of salt; the whole tribe gratefully stands on its head licking the salt earth, and after that the fruit tastes sweeter.

The old man walks with a staff, to the inconvenience of the youngsters, who always have sense enough to keep out of arm's length but as yet have not quite learnt to reckon with a stick as well—strange how it extends the power of the Man, ow! ow! And if they dance out of the way so quickly that the stick can't reach them, be it never so long, why then the old one *throws* it through the air, point foremost, and then again it gets you in the back—impossible to find his match, he *is* The Man!

The day is long, no one remembers the morning or other days that are past; there is only to-day, the summer day without beginnning or end, the forest man's day, eternal sunshine and the world a larder.

But even this day has an end; sunset finds the little troop in another part of the country; a certain tiredness has come over them, and the Man makes his dispositions for the evening. Careworn and dangerous he was in the morning when he began the day; anxious and violent is he now that he sees it vanishing. Few of the others have a memory that carries from morning to evening; they can't make out why it is not always daylight, and this gives rise to dissensions; some insist that the twilight is only a passing phenomenon, a wolf coming in front of the sun, or perhaps some indisposition of the heavens. The Man knows better and proceeds to collect his flock against what is coming, beating them up to form a square against the night. If the shortsighted creatures don't know what is good for them they must be protected against their will, by violence if need be; with tears and shrieks they are driven to bed, even a brief roar may be heard here and there from some big rebellious person, who is instantly felled to the ground. The Man knows the stiffnecked

among them: at night, when night has really come, they don't believe in the daytime; a whacking and into the square with you, and down with your heads!

Before darkness has fallen the Man has mustered his flock and keeps them together until night really falls; they grumble a little but finally have to give in to the old one; soon sleepiness comes over them, and there is silence. Nobody objects now to sitting in the bunch; on the contrary, each and every one tries to bore his way in as far as possible. The whole company, then, is sitting on the ground, rather high ground for choice, in a place selected by the Man and judged by him to be safe; in the twilight they look like a big hairy cluster, a human swarm, all with their backs outward to the dark and all with a head, or at least a nose and mouth, sticking out of the mass.

Lucky he who feels the pressure most! For the outsiders are the prey of the great cat. The very fact of sitting with one's back in the open air gives an intolerable sensation and many a wrestling bout takes place before they are finally settled and can change no more.

And then they go into the night. It is long and full of terror, not one of the poor wretches realizes from night to night how long and terrifying it is. They quake and hide their heads in one another's bosoms, sleep by fits and starts and wake up again hearing frightful things; and indeed frightful things are happening. When at last day breaks—after an eternity of waiting—the tribe is usually smaller by a few of its members; those on the outside have had to pay toll to the dark, the beasts of prey have been there.

At night the forest is changed; primeval darkness broods over the ground, and the creatures of darkness go about therein, cold gliding things which slay with a stab or crush in limbless coils; the great felines are out, showing their lamps, two and two, in the pitch-dark undergrowth; from above the owl stares down with his two, and from distant ravines comes the lion's paralysing roar, the hyena breaks

into his insane laughter, the forest reverberates with terror. It is haunted by a murmur of nocturnal creatures which turn darkness into horror, an element of itself; the darkness is thick with bats and furry things, full of cries, flappings, sighs and rustlings; the whole world is an abyss of horror.

Within the human mass, sitting with arms around each other's necks and eyes shut tight even though they are not asleep, they go through a long death agony, but continue to live and suffer. Nor is their fright without a cause: a wailing cry from the outside of the circle tells when the leopard or the wolf has come to fetch his due. And somebody must be outside, either the smallest or those who were too late to bore their way into the clump; they get peeled off in the course of the night, one or two deep, as it may happen.

But they don't acquiesce in it silently: the victim raises a howl so piercing as to make the ears tingle, and the rest of the bunch are ready to help a brother to the extent of joining in with a monstrous many-voiced shrieking that is heard far and wide and proclaims that man is suffering injustice. And in fact it does happen that even the great cats shrink before it, twitch their ears and give up the meal, letting the thing drop if it doesn't stop howling when shaken; it is almost enough to put a tiger off his food when there is such a penetrating noise with it. The wolf, on the other hand, takes seasoning and all; it is not in the habit of swallowing a howl the wrong way.

But even if the swarm loses a layer or two in the course of the night and bitterly laments the loss, calling the universe to witness—it is a long way in to the core. And then it is the weaklings that go; farther in sit the big strong men who were powerful enough to push their way through; within them are the women, the oldest and their children on the outside, all the young women in towards the middle; and there, farthest in and right in the center,

sits the Man! Thus does he form the order of battle in the evening; that is why he is so old.

When the flock raises its cry to signal an attack, he is not behind the others, for he has the biggest voice, of immense compass and timbre; its scaring power is great. But he also defends the flock, often not without success, by human cunning and arts that no one else is able to invent. When a carnivorous beast comes creeping after a little human, it may have a surprise in the shape of something hard flying out of the swarm, a cocoanut or perhaps even a stone; this is the old man in the middle who, protected by a thick layer of family, can keep his presence of mind; indeed it sometimes happens that a long branch becomes as it were alive, in some unexplained connection with the swarm; it comes from that direction and it is sharp, catches one on the tender snout; and then possibly one may prefer to leave the humans in peace and take a rodent instead, or a ruminant, which doesn't make sticks and stones fly in disquieting proximity to one's eyes.

But not every night was so disastrous to the tribe; they climbed into the trees when opportunity offered, and there they had less to fear, only against the snake they were defenceless; steep rocks were a good place for the night, when they happened to be in their neighbourhood before darkness came on. But night itself was not always alike either, it was darker or lighter, and when the moon was up the Forest Folk were not to be scared so easily, they could see what they had to deal with and take precautions in time.

On the clearest moonlight nights the Man gave up forming the tribe into a square, instead of that he led them to open places in the forest, where he had noted a hollow tree, and there the crowd spent the night, not in fear and trembling, but with music, dance and song.

All night long, hour after hour, the old man belaboured the hollow tree with his staff; booming, booming, boom-

ing; and at the same time he yelled at the top of his voice, incessantly, up in the most piercing notes of his register, and all the rest of the tribe vied with him, they had nothing like the Man's vocal powers but their numbers made up for it; and in time to this colossal bawling chorus all the men performed a dance, leaping up and down on the same spot, crouching low and stretching to their full height, swaggering round each other and hooting, all night long, while the moon travelled across the sky; and round about the women sat in the grass, in happy deference, hour after hour tirelessly looking on.

And it was as though all the animals kept at a distance, not knowing what to think; far and wide it was still in the moonlight, only the human howling lay like an island of noise in the midst of an ocean of stillness. The wild dogs halted in the neighbourhood and raised a chorus, sat on their haunches and howled with their muzzles turned towards the moon—they could make nothing of it against the Forest Folk; a solitary wandering hippopotamus came out of the woods, and you could see him raise his gaping jaws to heaven; *he* can let out a pretty note when he chooses, but not a sound was to be heard, the Forest Folk drowned him too; all nature was shouted down.

Gradually the concert calls the whole Forest Folk together, troop after troop arrives, following the sound in the moonlight, all the different tribes that are otherwise on a hostile footing with one another; before morning they have come in from every corner of the country and joined their voices to the great choir—a corroboree of all mankind. And the Man is equal to the occasion; his hair and beard bristle up, his madness becomes possession, with redoubled force he whacks the hollow tree, his yelling goes up a note higher, and around him goes the human race in a ring, each one bawling with the full force of his lungs, one beat and one heart, one note and one soul!

## IV

## THE FOREST FIRE

NEXT day the various tribes parted company, each to its own point of the compass; they had too many disagreements to keep together in one family when sober; it required the fervour of music to unite them. Besides, there were too many of them to find a living in the same tract. But a certain interchange had taken place before they separated; many had deserted one tribe for another, a lively swapping of wives had gone on, and when the Man reviewed the faces around him he didn't seem to recognize them all; some of them did their grovelling like beginners, as it were; they were from another part, had left their tribe that they might still hear the Man's voice and gaze upon his beard.

Without doubt he has a good voice and is able to scare away most animals that are sensitive to noise; even the lion blinks his eyes and feels his appetite going, prefers to walk off; great is the power of the Man.

Yet there is Gunung Api! When *he* roars . . . when *he* flashes. . . . *Fire!*

Terrible is fire. No use shouting then or beating the breast—you run, don't know what you're doing, stand stockstill, and your knees give under you, crawl on all fours—unnerving fire! Man is a small creature when it shows itself.

The beasts fear it and fly before it; far and wide they sneeze and throw up their heads when fire breaks out, wheel round and gallop night and day to get into quite another country. The wild cattle, the horses, rush madly

on in herds and trample each other down in flight when the smell of fire has twitched their nostrils; even the elephants lose their heads and prod one another with their tusks, smash into trees and spit themselves when the fire is behind them; every living thing runs and treads its neighbour to death when fire is abroad.

The Forest Folk knew and dreaded fire. The fear was in their blood, they had inherited it from primeval ancestors who still lived their lives in the trees and had no more dangerous enemy than fire. Fire climbed quicker than they and leapt quicker from tree to tree, and no more cruel doom could befall them than to be caught and devoured by fire. Its bite was more painful than that of any other known being; the slightest contact with it left unbearable anguish, with a single lick it took the hair off the whole body, and it ate up everything, bones and all; where fire had fed there was nothing left, though no one could see what became of all its food. For some invisible force was present in fire, with an appetite but apparently without a body like other animals; an invisible being in which Gunung Api revealed himself, a blasting devourer, a *spirit*, the ardent spirit of Gunung Api.

By putting many things together the Forest Folk had attained to the certain knowledge that the fire spirit had its home on the mountain. For every night it glared and threatened like a yawning fiery mouth up in the clouds, and sometimes the naked spirit itself came running down its sides in the form of a glowing tongue as broad as the whole valley and its forest; and then was the time to fly to other forests, right out of the country if possible, a journey of days and nights, if one was lucky enough to get away in time. For when the tongue of fire had reached a forest and begun to lick up the trees, there was not much warning before the whole burst into flame, and then you had the fire spirit roaring over you.

But when the fire had eaten itself into strength it was

the greatest and most frightful of all creatures. It might be there in an instant, it came from a tiny little spark to begin with, an insignificant fire-baby, which was born of glowing ash from the volcano or of the lightning, and licked about among the dry leaves, till suddenly it would climb crackling up the trees and grow big. It consumed at a distance through the air, even where its arms could not reach; when once it had taken hold and heated up everything about it the trees for a long way round burst into flame of their own accord, till the forest was one blazing furnace.

And fire was the Bright One, it turned night into day, did not vanish in the darkness like other creatures; it gave out light itself at night, so that everything near it could be seen. At night it was blood-red and visible miles away, but by day in the sunlight it had almost invisible airy limbs, wild and hot. Its face it never showed. But it had a voice and many different expressions, seething, roaring or giving out sharp loud cracks when it sat in a tree and devoured it. At its fullest power, when it rode upon the forest and encompassed the world, borne upon the storm, it advanced with a roar from one forest into another; and then there was no escape, except for those who had smelt betimes what was coming. For the smell of fire was not to be mistaken, it was abroad before the blaze had grown too strong; smoke too could be seen in time by the wary. Folk who were very wise could even predict the coming of the spirit long in advance. For the volcano gave out a smell when it was getting ready and behaved significantly in many ways, with internal rumblings and much smoke; those who had sense for these things guessed when it was bent on rapine and removed themselves as soon as the evil smell began to pour down the sides of Gunung Api.

It was another thing with the *lightning:* against that there was no guarding one's self in advance, it might strike at any moment. It was the Fire Spirit in another form; it

manifested itself in company with the thunder, Gunung Api in another aspect as the great heaven-roarer and flasher who from time to time sported roughly in the sky and made the woods unsafe to dwell in. Much of this flashing on high is for his own amusement and does no damage; every night the fire spirits dance among the clouds, red naked fellows leaping up in the heavens; but only rarely does the lightning actually strike the earth, so rarely that most men almost forget about it. And then suddenly one day it happens again.

It begins with heavy swollen clouds that collect about Gunung Api, beleaguer the whole heaven and turn the daylight sick—the first lightning flashes in the gloom as when a beast of prey shows its fang with quivering upper lip; and then comes the roar from him on high, a long rolling aerial roar which loses itself in the sky and awakes echoes in faraway forest ravines. The mastodon answers it a league away as he goes through the thicket—a wretchedly thin, long drawn-out nasal squeal, like the squeaking of a mouse in a tuft of grass compared with the noise of him who fills the world with thunder from his seat in the sky. The great helion gives his melancholy, threatening cough, with moaning repetitions, as he stands with his claws in the backbone of a deer: who is this disturbing him at his meal? The rhinoceros howls, as long as his wind lasts, and tears his way through the jungle, snapping trees as he goes, clean out of his wits like a hen; the hippopotamus sticks his head out of the water and protests with many a loud grunt against this rumbling up above, as he flicks the water out of his ears; our Fatty hates noise and doesn't quite know whom he has to deal with.

But all the smaller animals, who have no remarks to make, seek shelter noiselessly. The vultures drop from the sky like stones, with their wings folded, and make themselves small under a bush; the rodents go headlong into their holes; everything that can disappear disappears,

in a moment the earth seems clear of all living things.

The forest stands still with outstretched twigs in a pale green glare, as though stricken with sickness, against the blue-black gloom. Farther off it is in wild motion with thrashing branches; the tempest is approaching and lashes all in its path with a sinister howling.

Lightning again, and now the clap comes right on top of it; he is wroth, the Wrathful One, and near—flash upon flash, the whole world full of blue fire—fire and crash right in your eyes! He has struck—a tree droops amid blinding fire, splinters and collapses with crashing trunk, and the fire has seized on it, strikes out with its dazzling limbs from top to root. The forest is on fire!

The fire leaps from tree to tree, blazing wildly up the stems and devouring the foliage with crackling flames, hissing and humming; the smoke rolls up from the forest, and now the fire rages with a mighty blast, the Unseen One is blowing with his torrid hurricanes, long bright flickering tongues shoot up out of the jungle, surround it and tear onward, while lightnings split the sky and the thunder shatters mountains. The forest is dying; fire has it in its grasp and eats into it, swiftly, greedily, visible or invisible, but terrible, terrible.

And the forest dies. When fire and storm have passed on, with a consuming whirr and with an infinity of smoke galloping up into the sky, the burnt-up trees are left, some of them consumed right down to the roots, others, with which the fire has not yet finished, dropping a shower of sparks from their scorched limbs about the charred trunk; till the rain comes to wash the desolation into black miry pools among the gnawed and naked remnants of the stems, a melancholy corpse-strewn field for the sun to shine upon, when at last the thunder is silent and the rainbow gleams in the sky over the mountain. The beasts are dead, those which had not the power or the sense to save themselves;

they lie scorched up with swollen bellies amid the destruction of the woods.

But the Forest Folk, how have they fared? Not every tribe has had the same good fortune; some that sought safety with the wind behind them were overtaken by the fire and perished, others that chose the opposite way had a start of it, but not all; some of them in the general confusion came in the path of the utterly frenzied cattle and were trampled out of recognition. It was a question of their leader.

The herd that came out of it best was that which had the Man for its leader. He was old and experienced, had gone through the same thing before and survived it, knew what *not* to do. He was acquainted with fire and its ways—no use taking to the trees and flying from tree to tree as before other dangers, such as floods or when wolves were packing, maddened by hunger, no, down from the trees and out of the forest, out into open country, or failing that a broad glade in the forest where at any rate there was only the grass to burn and one might perhaps escape with singed eyebrows and blistered foot-soles—but best of all water, the river, if it could be reached and put between you and the fire, a lake, if nothing else a swamp, a water-hole, and then into it, take cover in it up to your nostrils, till the fire had passed.

A beastly medicine; ugh, water was the Forest Folk's horror, they dreaded water with every hair of their bodies, with all their ten sensitive finger-tips and noble toes; you drank water, but only with the extremity of funnelled lips, hating to get the slightest splash of it in your face, and as to getting bodily into it, that was a torture and an indignity to man, to say nothing of all the creepy things moving about in it which you got on you—leeches, duck-weed, wet stalks—ugh, the very idea of it made you shudder. Shrill cries of extreme distress were always heard

when any one had fallen into the water, and this from grief at getting wet rather than from fear of drowning—so disgusting was water!

But in a forest fire you had no better friend. Water was after all the power that could check fire. Everything else fed it and made it strong, but, like man, it could not endure water. This might be seen when it rained: then fire turned sick and shrivelled up over its prey, grew qualmish and stank unwholesomely, unable to spread its flames; and if the rain kept on properly, it died, was simply smothered, so even fire had its limits and its superior. It was so plainly to be seen that if water came upon fire it hissed, sent out smoke and was angry, but if more came it gave way and left its blackened prey behind; fire and water could not agree. So that the first thing to be done was to drop down from the trees when lightning showed its teeth in the sky, then run, double up and crawl away on all fours or on your feet, whichever was quickest, out into open spaces where it was wet.

The forest fire surprised the Man and his herd down on the edge of the great jungle, far from the river and with no lake near; but the old man instantly broke out of the forest into the long grass, darted a glance around him, at the burning forest in rear, straight ahead and to every side, sniffed the air—which way is the wind? where are the cattle going?—Water? He jumped into the air—a fairly broad glade and looks as if had a hollow in the middle, and isn't that rushes waving over there, marshy ground, swamp? Then his mind was made up, and he ran into the grass, ducked down, raised his head and sniffed, ran and stopped and ran again, with his staff in one hand and a big sharp flint in the other; and after him came all the rest of the tribe in a long single file, the men with uneasy, shifting eyes and shaking legs, with snorting breath and water pouring from their eyes; terror was in their bowels

and they simply followed the Man not knowing what they did. After them again the mothers, silent and swift as shadows, each with a young one in her arms and perhaps a couple of half-grown ones trotting after, all the children uniting their shrieks in one immense earsplitting lamentation. But the mothers were silent, no one knows how frightened they were or what they went through; their eyes were mad with fear, but so they were always; they followed the rest and said nothing. The tail of the procession was made up of all the young people of the tribe, the striplings and the slim young girls—*they* had the becoming halo of terror all over their bodies in the form of bristling silky down; whatever might happen they were not going to run away without showing some grace in their flight; but they had not much to say, they rushed on in the wake of the others and were not going to be the last of all either. The young lads pretended not to care, barked in their rough voices and tried to look as if there was no hurry, but trod each other down all the same if the pace wasn't fast enough.

The whole flock trekked through the long grass towards the middle of the glade, where sure enough, as the Man had guessed, there was a swamp with open water—and so down you go, all hands into the duckweed! Splash, splash, splash, women first, as is right and proper, all the mothers, heir eyelids quivering at the first splash in the face, but they take their ducking without a murmur, children and all; then the young girls—they cry over it but have to go: one of the young ladies puts on the brake, on all fours at the edge of the pool, and won't go in—ugh no, it's too nasty—so the Man has to make short work of her, one on the side of the head and a knee behind, and out goes Sister, down among the eels and the leeches. Then all the men, splash, splash, splash; finally the lads, not without giving tongue; and, last of all, when everybody is in safety, the Man, the

old leader himself. With a sour grimace he jumps in, carefully, not wetting his head or his hands before it is absolutely necessary.

So there they sat, the whole lot of them, in the waterhole, just at the right depth to have their heads out but ready to dive to the nostrils when the fire came. And now they were in comparative security, they recovered their voices and became communicative, with much modulated grunting and wise wrinklings of the forehead, smackings of the lips and twitchings of the nose. They are small, the end of the world is at hand, but their loquacity is irresponsible to the last.

From the place where they sat they had a view across the level to the edge of the forest, and terrible were the sights they saw. The fire spread with frightful rapidity, black, bellying clouds poured up from the woods, grew one out of another and rolled up towards the sky; sparks flew high at the base of the clouds, a tremendous roaring, crackling and booming was heard and grew more and more intense, drew nearer, spread wider and wider; now the flames could be seen above the trees, an immense extended flaming body running along on the top of the forest, leaping up into the smoke, going out and bursting forth again. Wild red and yellow flames clung to the forest with their bodies waving high up in the air like serpents tearing backwards at their prey, and a frightful hissing was heard, loud thunderous reports; the whole forest was now one raging, crackling blaze, fearful to behold; but it had reached the edge of the woods and was running on, eating its way at a furious pace on both sides; without a doubt it would go right round the glade and on to the woods beyond. The people down in the swamp gave a sigh, knowing they were going to be surrounded; but actually their danger was past; there were no trees near them to burn, they were sitting in the middle of a ring which the fire had

to pass round—uncomfortable, no doubt, in water up to their chins and with the heat of the vast furnace stinging their faces, coughing and half-choked by the smoke, but still saved. As for the beasts, their fate was worse, as bad as it could be.

They saw them, saw their wild race for life, and they were still grey in the face with death reflected in their eyes from what they had seen. It came just before the fire had reached the edge of the forest; in front of it chased by it, a mighty herd of animals burst out of the woods on to the plain with a thunder of hoofs, a roaring, neighing and bellowing, for there were beasts of every kind in the herd: buffaloes and horses, elephants, deer, wild boars, bears, lions, giraffes and rhinoceroses, friends and foes all mixed together with never a thought but of flying for their lives; so, far from scattering, they crowded together and rushed onward in a dense billowing mass, in which could be heard the sound of breaking bones. The elephants rolled as in a heavy sea of animal forms, howling in their frenzy with trunks raised aloft; the long necks of the giraffes towered above the rest, trying this way and that way until they fell, their legs broken under them in the crush; a thousand galloping bulls surged in from every side, all trying to get to the middle, plunged their horns into each other's flanks, charged each other with heads down and mad blasts of the nostrils; all smaller animals were smashed up and trampled into the ground—and in spite of all obstacles the herd came on, swift as the wild wind, grinding its own members to death and destruction as it went, over a bridge of the carcasses it left behind in its blind flight—onward it came, in a few seconds it was across the open ground and plunged, bellowing, roaring, howling, and with a crackling of broken bones, into the forest on the other side. There the fire would follow them up and the race would be continued; they had but a short start, you could hear at one and the same time the herd of beasts

thundering on through the jungle and the fire thundering on their heels around the open glade.

But now the Forest Folk had something else to think about; their turn had come, they were to be put to the proof—the grass was on fire, the conflagration had spread from the woods to the open ground. They ducked down into the water as far as they could go: this hazard must be faced like the rest. And it was soon over; the fire raced across the plain in an instant, but avoided the water. Then it was seen that the grass concealed a number of animals that had taken refuge there—a writhing mass of serpents, which the fire, incidentally useful, scorched up—a porcupine, which arched its back and raised its quills against the fire when it could no longer find cover, but these proved to be highly inflammable, and the poor rodent was roasted; this happened close to the pool, and the Forest Folk stretched their necks, could not help sniffing it; a sweet, a very sweet odour proceeded from the porcupine when the fire had dealt with it; even the dead snakes lying near, with bellies split open and venom issuing from their entrails, had a particularly good broiled smell; and although the jungle folk themselves were sitting, so to speak, in the jaws of death, the present moment appealed to their power of imagination—they were only human, had been without food for some time; it made them thoughtful, mumbling with their lips.

But still their trials were not over; a new excitement of another kind seized them, violently, giving them such a start that a regular wave washed over the surface of the pool; the youngsters shrieked piercingly, and even the Man himself gave a cry of astonishment and alarm—for as though by magic a huge striped tigress sprang out of the grass just in front of the water-hole.

Tiger-like, she had kept concealed in the grass until the last moment, although only a few feet away, but now she had to move, the fire had tracked her down—and there she

stood in front of the water with a long look over to the opposite bank; crouched for a spring with all four feet gathered under her, but did not jump; it was too far. Then she raised a paw, raised it again, as if to go down into the water, but each time shook her paw with a cold shiver, a feeling as though some drops had already reached her—she *could* not. And then, seeing herself caught, she blinked her great yellow eyes in an abandonment of grief, opened her mouth as though for a miaow, but no sound came; the great yellow eyes rested upon the people in the swamp, but she did not see them, felt too bad to see anything.

There she stands, hemmed in between fire and water; never more shall she ride before sundown on the back of a ruminant with her claws sunk deep in the quivering flesh and her mouth on the artery, sucking the source of life, thirsty before and thirsty after the salt drink; never more shall she steal through the terrifying darkness of the jungle's depth, fearless of the dark as darkness and terror itself; nor stretch her limbs in the midday sun and bake her flaming flanks till the hairs sparkle and thrill with vitality, purring the while like a voluptuous spinning-wheel; nor play any more with her living food, that horrible game after which one of the players is missing and the other sleepy; nor take part in abominable love-duets in the moonlight, nor wash herself with her paw and in her love of cleanliness remove the slightest trace of deer's blood from her whiskers after a murder—now she is to be washed of her sins in an ardent element, the fire is upon her, a flame already has her by the tail.

But then she springs round to confront the fire, which is crackling in the long dry grass; she utters the death roar, tries to fight the hot thing, springs straight up in the air before the fire, fighting with all her claws out, hits at the flames and gets her paws scorched, gets her beard scorched, fans the fire by striking at it; sparks and burning grass

close over her head, and amid deafening hisses and sputtering she rolls in the fire, biting herself where the fire bites, tearing long gashes in her face in a cloud of sparks, till the grass is burnt beneath her. Then, madly snorting and sneezing, without a hair on her body, without ears, blinded and naked like a thing all flayed, with the bones of her tail bared, and sweating blood, she gallops across the glade, straight into the forest among the burning, white-hot trees.

The Forest Folk in the water-hole sat with staring eyes, feeling they knew not what and grunting in undertones. Had they not seen Death die? Crueller even than the tiger is fire!

The forest burned itself out. But it was evening and night before the earth had cooled so that the Forest Folk dared to climb out of their place of refuge. And not till the next day could they think of going on. For them existence was to begin again from the beginning; the forest was burnt for miles around; a new forest must be sought, they must wander out into the unknown; and so the Man grasped his flint in his left hand and led off, talking to himself and full of wisdom as he walked in front; the men followed on his heels, after them the mothers, and last of all the young people, in just the same order as they had come.

But meanwhile their number had increased, for one of the women had had a baby, from fright and before its time, while they sat in the pool given over to death—no easy birth. Amid all the thundering noise of the fire and the doomed beasts a dismal note asserted itself, the cry of a woman in birth-pangs, and soon after the feeble whimperings of a new-born babe announcing its entry into the world with wailing.

The little one came into the world half-drowned, the smoke of a disaster was his first breath, howls and heat his first sensations. But no sooner was he born than the little wrinkled imp had strength to find his way, greedy

though blind, to his mother's breast in search of nourishment; one creature sucking life from the other, as is the way of things. Happy was the mother to have got this little wretch, that was uglier than death, toothless as a senile but hungry as a leech; she made a nest for it of her arms and breast, hid it from the Man and kept it quiet with her mouth against its mouth, lest he should hate it and in an access of rage fall upon this new whining thing in his company. Weakened and devoted she stumbled on when they had to go, the last of the herd, with a trail of blood behind her.

And so the procession moved off on its wanderings, the Man in front with spear and stone, ready to thrust or strike, the Woman in the rear with the fruit of her body and her sex, a never-healing wound which the Man keeps open.

But on the whole that terrible day showed a balance in favour of mankind; after the fire they entered upon a series of feasts and solemnities; for miles around the earth was laid with a banquet of meat, from roast pigeons fallen from the sky to elephants broiled whole with vegetables in their mouths. The death of the beasts was no loss to men, and they themselves had suffered only an increase.

They increased in days of prosperity, and calamities also caused women to give birth; thus they increased and multiplied. The Man put up with it, though at heart he hated that any but himself should eat his fill, even among his own people; still, numbers were a consideration, especially at night, and for other reasons. It is a known fact that many yell louder than one, the greater the chorus the stronger their rights; therefore company was tolerated.

The new-born child was accepted: it was a boy; the Man pinched him till he cried and beat him till he stopped—the paternal initiation—after that he seldom bestowed any attention on him. He was in his mother's charge and she nursed him into a human being; rounded and straight was her body when she got him, her firstborn, and her breasts

hung like empty bags when he was weaned; but then he was such a blooming boy to look at, a real wonder, with his mother's fulness and something of his father's vocal powers; he soon made his mark in the tribe.

Nature had looked upon him with favour. At his birth he was baptised and tasted death from drowning, but water vouchsafed him life; his first breath was stopped by coughing, yet the smoke did not choke him; troops of frenzied cattle shook the earth close by him, a stench of burnt horn, blood and sweat was the first he smelt, and the fright became imbedded in his instincts; but even the maddened herd let him live, galloped around the place where he was, on both sides of the swamp—though many were forced into the mire and perished there, none came where the Forest Folk were crouching;—the tigress was within his own length of him, but left him untouched; all creation had received him in a way apart, all the powers of destruction had revealed themselves in their frightfulness, life had been wasted as though the whole world was to be emptied, and just at that moment life was given to him.

Was there any other explanation of this but that almighty, all-subduing fire had shone upon his birth and held all other powers in subjection? It seemed that his life was sacred from the very beginning.

Therefore, in memory of the great forest fire and for the gratification of Him on high who had thundered and strewed fire over the earth but spared men, they made Gunung Api his gossip, consecrated the boy to him and gave him the name of Fyr.

He became a great man of fire and the forefather of a rich race.

## V

## FYR'S CHILDHOOD

HIS first steps in the world Fyr took on all fours, painfully crawling to begin with, then running pretty fast on hands and feet with his backside in the air; and his mother had many a fright at the boy's inconceivably rapid disappearance if she turned away for a moment.

Fyr went exploring in the grass and came upon other quadrupeds who gladly adopted him as a playfellow; a litter of jackal cubs that had strayed from their lair in the neighbourhood and received him with joyful barks. They had wrestling matches where cubs and man-child rolled over on the ground in a downy mass, now the cubs on top with their forepaws victoriously planted on the vanquished, now Fyr uppermost with as many cubs under him as he could get his arms round. The muzzle and eyes of an elderly serious mother jackal were watching a little way off in the long grass, and on the other side Fyr's mother stood on guard, equally anxious and wrapped up in her young one. By such chance meetings acquaintances are made.

Partridges whirred into the air when Fyr walked through the grass, which was so high that he could not see above it; their noise startled him and he pursued the young birds which could not fly and ran chirping among the stalks; but they would not play with him, much as he would have liked it. And the little red-deer calves and baby foals he was lucky enough to see would not stop either when he approached; Fyre stretched out his hands

to them, and they nodded, distended their nostrils, were not indisposed, but only sighed and trotted off when Fyr came too near. Other great horned creatures, before whom it was his turn to retire, came and went in the grass; it is a wide and complex world, what may one not meet in it? A long grey form crouches in the high grass, something with a veiled shifting light in its eyes and a long hungry jaw—but scarcely had he seen it when there is a horrid scream behind him and his lame mother appears in the grass with wild antics and keeps up a hoarse yelling until the grey stranger has slunk away; then he is shaken by the arm and dragged home, gets smacked and feels scalding tears falling on him; so now he will know another time that that new acquaintance is not to go any further. There are not a few things to learn before one knows the world of the jungle grass; meanwhile Fyr takes his hands off the ground and gets clever at walking on his feet.

The time arrived when it was hopeless for his mother to follow him; she saw his active head bob up and down above the grass as he moved like a deer in a leaping airy gallop; like the wind running over the grass, like the wild wind he galloped, till he was out of sight in the distance.

Fyr vanished from the tribe together with a band of comrades of his own age who were also able to look after themselves; they were glad to escape the dragging about listening to the grown-up people's endless outpourings about things which as yet had no existence for them: tribal wranglings, women's chastity and the like—things which as far as they were concerned never resulted in anything but a drubbing.

The pace of the tribe was too slow for them; on its day's roaming it never moved so rapidly as not to allow time for the men to wrangle at the top of their voices on the way; they stood still, right up against each other, with clenched fists, stretching their necks; walked away with

a scornful laugh and came back with more abuse; picked up stones and held them in their hands; the Man would come up and yell louder than the adversaries, and so they stood bickering, all the men on tiptoe close up to each other, shouting each other down; the troop came to a halt, the women sat down with bowed heads, prepared to wait until the Man had roared the whole herd into silence. It is slow travelling when quarrels have to be patched up on the trail. Why keep together when you wear each other into wrinkles and all the rest of the world is open to everybody?

Well, that was what the growing youngsters didn't yet understand; they swept on ahead, increased their start more and more, until they were out of sight of the tribe and began to make a trail for themselves.

But they too kept together, with one at their head; it could not be otherwise, although as yet it was not violence, bitter compulsion, that held the young herd together—abuse of power at the top and dependence as a primary need below; it came about of itself through one being naturally the most active; he took the lead and the rest ran after him.

Foremost, of course, was Fyr; he walked upon air, it was the wind that animated him in his wonderful childhood; his lips were parted, his eyes wide open from much seeing and wandering, his hair flew out behind him, he was slim, a restless rover, with a careless song on his lips, fond of birds, a friend of flowers, a lover of the least little things: a scrap of down floating on the wind, a feather, a little fir-cone, even if it was not fit to eat—it was still his friend, it was a precious little cone, and he would give it away; so great was his heart that he must part with his treasures to others. So rich of soul was Fyr.

At the head of a band who worshipped him Fyr first searched the open country, prairies, thickets and rocks,

and all that was to be seen and found therein; then they ventured into the great forest, and there they were lost for a long time; they acquired a taste for living in the trees, left the solid earth altogether and did not return to it until they were rich in experiences.

There is a country between heaven and earth, a world entirely by itself, up in the trees: the airy bridge of climbing plants and interwoven foliage that stretches for miles like a connected carpet through the jungle. So dense is the growth that it looks like a green floor up under the tree-tops, a forest within the forest, stretched out and supported by the lofty trunks and with a waving roof of leaves overhead. Whole layers of mould are formed up here from decayed leaves, dust that is blown up, moss and rotting wood, worked together by worms and ants; a green sward in the air, watered by thundershowers and manured by seed-bringing birds; here grow grasses, great fields of weeds, wide hanging gardens filled with the hum of bees and bearing thousands of birds' nests, shaded by green awnings, perfumed by flowers and steaming with heat.

Up in this hanging world Fyr made merry with his companions; on this dangerous quaking floor they galloped around, stuck their legs through and pulled themselves up again after enjoying a dip into destruction; here they swung on a bridge of liana over an abyss, eating fruit and throwing the shells at each other's heads; always on the go, always nosing after a chance of showing off in some daring feat. Fyr works his way up into the topmost branches of a lofty tree, thrusts his head out of the foliage and shows himself, turns recklessly round to every side; *he* doesn't tremble for anything in earth or sky; Nobody dares follow him on such a breakneck climb. Anyhow it is lovely up there above all the tree-tops; it looks as if you could walk along over the whole forest. Here the air is full of swallows with their shuttle-flight in and out above the trees, storks and eagles circle round each

other in great dizzy spirals far up towards the clouds and the blue spaces where the sun dwells. In an instant and for ever it all enshrines itself in Fyr's heart: the splendour of the sky and the swallows' airy flight, the superb force of the great birds, the sublimity of the clouds and the marvel of the sun; he has known flight, has been light as the air around him.

From the highest tops of the forest Fyr descended into the underworld by a dare-devil climb down the slender creepers and was lost in the gloom of the jungle's depths till his comrades began to be anxious about him. A little later he was seen scrambling up another tree, with loud shrieks and his hair on end all over his body; a snake was wriggling at his heels and the whole band shrieked, stiff with horror—until they saw it was a dead branch that Fyr was pulling up the tree after him; did any one ever see his like!

After that Fyr coolly led the whole party down into the depths, which no longer had any secrets for him. Looking down from the swinging tents of vegetation up in the trees, the trunks lost themselves in the darkness of the undergrowth, an eternal gloom by day and night, full of a noiseless movement of bats and great sluggish moths; slow, far-away echoes came up from it, the dripping of moisture in the depths of the forest; and viscous fumes ascended, a vapour heavy with dead wood and the resinous sweetness of new shoots.

But down at the bottom, below the heavy haze, a brewing of stagnant waters was going on, the tepid liquor of the swamp; moisture trickled down the tree-trunks, and among the roots were black pools bubbling with the fermentation of their thick humidity, wherein bloated toads warmed their backs; the mud was full of life, the land-crab with his mouth in quivering motion, fat snails crawling among the ferns and making the pale frond nod and show its spotted underside as their sticky bodies glided

from one on to another, and centipedes coiling about the colourless stalks of plants that had never seen the light.

Here all was still, with a dense sinister quietness in which the slightest sound was heard—the bursting of a bubble, or when a snail opened its spiracle with a tiny smack—a fly buzzed and stopped still somewhere in the darkness where it caught a thread of light thin as gossamer, and on a pillow of moss, where a ghostly shimmer of light came through, lay a green lizard curled up fast asleep with open enamel eyes.

Fyr and his friends went about down here for a while, tasting the snails, breaking fungi in half, but not saying much, for the echoes had an ugly sound in those dark depths; they drank from the fresh pools and got tadpoles in their mouths, shuddered and looked up, longing for the daylight.

Yes, and there it was, high up above them. Halfway up in the airy space between the stems there was the glimmer of a few slanting rays which penetrated through from the daylight above and painted eyes upon the bark of a tree, a message from the sun. And up at the very top the straight stems lost themselves in a spacious ramification and passed into the dense united roof of foliage which at its dizzy height was illumined by a green twilight with starry patches of blue—the sky and the trembling leaves blending together in a sea of light and colour. At one spot the roof was so dazzling that the eye could scarcely endure it; leaves and sky were dissolved in a ring of many-coloured fire—behind it was the sun. The song of birds came with a distant swell from those green abodes, where the voice of the forest itself murmured continually, a mighty, lonesome breath that turned to music.

They soon had enough of the underworld and climbed up again into the hanging gardens, gambolled joyously in delightful sunny pavilions, in the company of birds and surrounded by flowers and bees, the scent of honey, moted

sunbeams in the gaps of the foliage, the song of the cicada, the screeching of many-hued parrots, the cooing of doves—ah, the exceeding happiness of doves which you hear in their thick voices as they sit in their hidden nests —the chatter of the magpies from tree to tree, the cuckoo —that mysterious hide and seek played by a feathered creature which calls its question, Where am I? laughs and calls again and answers itself from the other end of the wood. Magic is at work in the forest, and the forest listens, sonorous, and is still; far and wide the forest lies with noonday, the drowsy present, in its embrace.

Thunder sounds afar off from Gunung Api, a muttering that makes the world seem larger and runs with lowering echoes through the valleys, from one domed wall of forest to the other and from the depth of the jungle comes the crash of an elephant as it breaks down a tree with its shoulder to get at the leaves.

In the deep resounding space between the trunks of the forest the woodpecker taps at a dead branch, beating time with its beak faster than one can follow the sounds, every beat marking the flight of an instant; and yet, as long as the woodpecker admonishes us of the transitory nature of things, so long shall the trees and the feathered creatures therein and the beasts and wondering man have life.

Fyr spent his childhood in the forest, and it wrought a wonder in his soul, lofty and profound, which was preserved in his blood and was destined to remain a wonder in the soul of distant generations when the forest was no more.

He came down from the trees in the same manner as his primeval ancestors had come down; he grew too big for them to bear him. At first he was not too heavy to scale the lightest branches in the very tops of the trees, then he had to stay on the thicker branches lower down, and at last he could no more get across from one tree to another, but

had to come down to earth when he wanted to move about in the forest. As small insectivorous creatures, light as squirrels, his race had taken to the trees, and there it had gone so well with them that they had grown into great heavy men of the woods; a gradual descent, through generation after generation, brought them back to earth.

But not all had gone the human way: a remnant of the original stock, side by side with what was derived from it, stayed behind in the transforming forest. The small four-handed creatures who had shared their home with men when the forest was young still swung in the tree-tops, a strange, boisterous folk with restless eyes, without pauses, without memory, always hurrying as if they were too late and must hustle to try and catch up some destiny or other; Fyr stretched out his hands to them, wanted to talk to them; he mimicked their grimaces and threw in a laugh, pursed up his mouth for them, but they did not understand, flew off like a whirlwind and made hostile faces as they turned in their flight; like a band of startled spirits he saw them disappear and heard them scolding long after; Fyr could not win their friendship, and yet he had a place in his heart for every creature in the forest.

Nor would the big, dangerous dog-faced men, who lived outside the forest in the open rocky country under the mountain, receive advances or be reconciled, whatever tricks one might show for their benefit—going on all fours like them, striking the ground with the flat of the hand like them, ducking down or making one's self tall like them, with all kinds of eloquent twitchings of the forehead—they turned aside their striped face, whose grin had stiffened to a mask, wagged their jaws and showed their teeth, unable to sustain a man's gaze but ready for violence if he came nearer; they were ugly and sufficient to themselves, there was no getting a smile out of them. And so one had to let them go; they went about all day long on the mountain side turning over stones and putting every-

thing they found under them in their mouths, worms, snails and ants; it looked as if they expected to find something special under every stone they raised—a forgotten trail, an old, lost destiny—and instead found only vermin, food sufficient for the moment but no sustenance for the soul; they were in retreat and knew not joy.

Far in the interior of the jungle, in the most lonely and inaccessible places, Fyr and his comrades might come upon queer old men of the woods who lived down on the ground, retired and silent, not very different from men and yet not men, strangely wrinkled, as though from great age, and worn by grief; they defended themselves with mute expressions of terror which made horror creep upon the back of him who approached; it was always dark where they sat, in an attitude of collapse, back to the root of a tree; and if one came again they were no longer there, they wanted to be alone and made their way deeper and deeper into the forest to find peace. Change was no longer to their liking; when transformation was at work in the forest they went off to some place that remained the same. They were born old; and, such as they were, the only thing to do was to leave them alone. They too had come down from the trees because they had grown too big for them, but they had remained in the forest and in the shadows.

When he was grown up Fyr sought his tribe again and found it in the open country on the lower slopes of Gunung Api, roaming about with the Man in the midst as usual. The meeting was not marked by any special cordiality: they looked up and observed his presence, with the youthful band that accompanied him, as though they had never been away. An addition to the striplings of the tribe was neither desirable nor the reverse—they knew their place, didn't they? on the outside of the square at night.

But Fyr's return to the main body made no small stir among the women: the raw-boned lad had grown into a

handsome joyous youth, tall and faultless as a young tree, with eyes like stars and a big happy mouth; he brought a parrot with him from the forest; the bird was his friend and sat upon his hand, it could talk like a man. It appeared from one thing and another that Fyr had acquired a secret understanding with the beasts while he had been away; he was seen in the company of wild, roving horses on the prairies, and always had some young animal that he had picked up and took about with him for pleasure.

But Fyr did not stay with the tribe for very long at a time; more often than not he was away on long expeditions, exploring farther and farther into the forest and up the banks of the river towards Gunung Api; it was even said that he roamed right out to the sea, of which the tribe had some vague inkling, but where they had nothing to do. His movements were periodical, at some seasons he was away and at others he came back again, according to the weather; and the weather had habits of its own, fairly regular to those whose memory served to record them.

The life of the tribe had not many attractions for Fyr; it was monotonous. The Man was always the same, and there was no denying that latterly he had begun to be noticeably lazy. The old man preferred sitting still; he sat on the ground day after day, on some little knoll, raised above the rest of the tribe who assembled about him in a ring; there he sat in superhuman silence, only using his eyes, which ranged from one to another or lost themselves in long unfathomable gazing at the sky. He ground his teeth with closed mouth and moved his lips imperceptibly, mutely savouring his own perfection of power and wisdom; he twitched the tip of his nose as cold private meditations came and went. Food was brought to him, and he ate without laying aside his dignity; he just gave a little toss of the head when he wanted to call up some

sinner, and he still used his staff to some purpose, but not for beating; there was a shorter way, straight forward, and he stabbed, making deep bleeding holes with the pointed end of the stick. Crying children had to be brought to him to be pinched; but his sight was no longer very good and the mothers could slip a limb of their own in between and rejoiced at the bruises on their flesh if they were able to save their little ones.

Over the women the old man's sway was exercised more and more without the use of words, simply by the play of his features and as little as possible of that; they fell miaowing in the dust if he did but move a hair. Whether because it was beneath his dignity or he had become indolent, he no longer visited upon his wives the sacred act of violence reserved to himself, but he still encompassed them at a distance with a brutal brightening of the eye and indicated his right with a gesture, before which they lay flat as hens shrinking from the hawk. The outrage begun in spirit by the old one was then usually completed behind his back by the younger men; at last their time had come.

Finally the Man lay down all the time and had people brought to him, felt his way with closed eyes until he found a fleshy spot and then dug his fingers in. Ah, at one time he had had such strength in his thumbs that he could pluck a piece of flesh out of a man's body, but now his claws scarcely left a blue mark.

And thus he lay one morning, with scarcely a sign of change, but without movement and without breath, white-haired, long and thin, with stupid eyes open to the sky. He was cold; they brought a child to his hand, but he pinched no more. It was he and yet not he—in silent wonder and fear the tribe stood around him, and for the first time it occurred to many of them that the dreaded leader who in their eyes had towered to heaven, super-

human in size, almighty, unapproachable, was in reality a poor withered old scarecrow and had long been so; it was fear they had feared, not he.

When they realized that he would move no more, one of the men stretched out his hand and took the staff, swung it above his head with a roar, and instinctively all the rest fell on their knees—now *he* was the Man.

For years afterwards, when the tribe passed the spot where the Old Man had lain down, he was still there; they reverently turned aside, but stole a glance and saw him lying in the same position, a long whitened skeleton in the grass and the dreaded head turned to the sky with gaping teeth and great empty eye-sockets.

## VI

### ON THE MOUNTAIN

WHEN Fyr was quite grown up and had a beard he left his tribe and took up his abode alone upon the mountain. Here he went through a course of learning and acquired arts whose bearing was so great as to bring about a parting in the destinies of the Forest Folk; those who followed Nature remained her dependents and had to migrate in order to retain the conditions they required; those who followed him rose superior to the restraints of existence and became changed men. The elders went in search of warmth, but he showed his followers the way to fire.

Down in the lowlands eternal summer still prevailed, but it fell to Fyr's lot to steal a march on what was coming by making his way up the mountain; here in a rarer atmosphere be became acquainted with cold nights, but at the same time learned to endure them in company with fire. He became familiar with fire and bequeathed to his descendants a power which was to bring them out of the state of Nature and lead them into the path of humanity.

Early in life Fyr felt attracted to Gunung Api, for he had been dedicated to fire as a child and had received its name, it was his kinsman; and when he judged himself fitted thereto he set out to present himself.

No one had ever had the unreasonable, unseemly idea of going up Gunung Api; no one had seen that side of the mountain which looked away from the valleys where the Forest Folk lived, nor the land beyond which was hidden by the volcano—if there *was* land and not simply a vast

abyss of fire—what was behind Gunung Api none could guess. All that was known was that the sun came from there; it rose every day behind the foot of Gunung Api; the moon too came from that quarter—likely enough big sources of fire lay behind there. And Fyr felt drawn towards the heavenly bodies, for they must also be of his kindred if they came from Gunung Api. The desire of getting in closer touch with them and fathoming their ways was a reason the more for Fyr's taking to the heights.

On his way up the mountain—which Fyr did not cover in one journey but in many, day after day, carefully examining every bit of ground as he went and always ready for retreat if the mountain should show signs of disapproval—he first left the forest behind; the palms and warm plants he was used to in the lowlands gave place to a different and cooler vegetation. From the height of Gunung Api's nearest spur he was able to look down into the valleys, which lay steaming with warm haze and growth; a heavy, surcharged vapour came up from them, and beneath this blanket of luxuriance the Forest Folk were now wandering; but above Fyr's head the air was clear, a cool breath descended upon him; all that he met henceforth on his upward way was a new world to him.

He made unexpected discoveries regarding the immense size of the mountain; at a distance it looked like a peak that one simply had to go up, it seemed to rise up close at hand; but it took many days' journey merely to reach the foot of the mountain and wide stretches of country extended over the lowest slopes; what looked from below like scratches in the mountain side turned out to be vast precipitous ravines that lost themselves in an abyss below and yawned to the blue sky towards the mountain top, with a rushing stream at the bottom and choked with lava blocks and bushes. Still higher up lay steep beds of ashes, the end of which was out of sight on the precipitous slope; but here the mountain was already so restless under

foot and gave out such ominous smells that Fyr could not make up his mind to go on towards the summit. At a lower altitude, where plants still grew, strange dried-up bushes and dwarf trees, Fyr worked his way round the mountain and to begin with got a view of the other side.

Here a disappointment awaited him. It turned out that the nature of the mountain was much the same on the farther side as on the side he knew; here too it passed through different belts of vegetation and great waves of broken country into a vast lowland filled with haze from countless swampy woods, a country as far as the eye could reach like that Fyr came from. On one side the land ended in a deep bay with an infinite horizon of water in the farthest distance; this was the sea. And now it appeared that it was from this end of the world the sun came, here he rose red and gleaming every morning. So after all the sun was not born of Gunung Api. Fyr saw that he had small hope now of reaching the place of his rising: one of the tasks he had set himself receded into the vague unknown. But during the time of his stay on the mountain he kept a watch on the sun's movements and in the course of years became acquainted with its habits.

Years—yes, he was the first among men to take note of time and keep record of the passage of the heavenly bodies, their return and the regularly repeated changes on the earth that were connected therewith. From his high and airy station, whence he had a free view round most of the horizon, and with Gunung Api as a fixed point for the rest, he gradually became clear about the paths of the sun and moon and the time it took them to complete their course and begin it over again.

Most striking was the behaviour of the moon; it appeared now round, now in a more or less shrunken condition, as though bites had been taken out of it; now it vanished altogether and then began to come again, a little

bit of it, which however increased in size every evening, as though it were healing of itself and recovering from its sufferings; and this repeated itself in the course of a number of nights so great that one could not exactly remember how many they were but had a certain definite feeling that the interval was the same each time; that was the moon's time. What else happened to the moon, why it got sick and came right again, Fyr did not attempt to explain to himself; there seemed to be some fairly uniform encounters going on in the sky of the same kind as when the beasts disagreed down on earth: dogs that gnawed at the moon, clouds, monsters that swallowed it, but then it grew again every time; Fyr contented himself as a spectator by counting up how long it took each time: a moon's time, neither more nor less, about as many nights as he had fingers and toes and fingers again; a long, congested calculation and difficult to keep in the head.

But the sun's time was a more difficult matter. It was a good while before Fyr even discovered the fact that it had definite recurring periods in its movement; and, after he had noticed that it rose and set differently from day to day, though imperceptibly each day, it took years before he grasped how this was and how long the interval—years, in point of fact, for that was the conclusion of the matter, when he was able to survey the sun's course and the time it took. It was a long time, and no small mental effort to remember so long; but here Fyr was assisted by his experience of the moon's phases, which divided time into smaller and more manageable lengths. When he had observed the sun's changes they consisted in this: that it rose at a point on the horizon which day by day moved round to another point, so that one might expect it to travel by degrees all round the horizon, but it did not do that; when it had reached a certain point, which Fyr had noted from his fixed look-out on the mountain, it turned and began to rise farther back every day in the direction

of the point it had started from, and so on over again. Why? Yes, why cross the sky every day to go down into the depths on the other side, for the sake of the walk, and why shift one's starting point every day within certain bounds, and then turn back again? It must be due to some peculiarity of the mind with which one is equipped as a heavenly body, capriciousness of behaviour combined with the most rigid regularity in the long run. So much is certain, that when Fyr compared his calculations the absolute result was that the moon appeared round just as many times as he had fingers with his two big toes thrown in, during the period it took the sun to travel along the horizon and return to its starting point; that was the sun's time. And by this vague standard, in itself incapable of survey but holding good once for all, Fyr learned also to measure his own existence. From the first time he observed that the sun turned and that it would turn again with the same interval, he reckoned his years; there were just as many of them while he lived on the mountain as he had fingers on one hand, together with the thumb on the other.

Over the nature of the sun he pondered much. It was forbidden to look it in the face, for that one was far too insignificant, and it smote the eye with weakness if one dared. In that respect it was like the fire from Gunung Api; the most natural conclusion was that one had to deal with a fire hovering in the sky. But he did not go deeper into that side of the sun's riddle until he had become familiar with fire.

In connection with the course of the sun and the year it dawned upon Fyr that plants and trees changed their appearance at intervals which occurred, and recurred precisely by periods corresponding with the year. Down in the valleys where the trees were always alike this would not have been noticed, but on the mountain it was other-

wise. On ascending from the warm valleys of the lowlands one came upon trees of a different and cooler kind; after the palms came light, fresh leafy forests, and above them again was a belt of pines, and then again more foliage trees, but of a slender, feebler kind; finally wide tracts with nothing but a growth of low bushes and hardy creeping plants. On the mountain Fyr discovered that there is a blossoming time, a fruit time, and a time when plants are barren; after which they come into leaf again and begin anew; all within the same period that the sun takes on its journey back and forth: this was the first observation of the seasons. It was closely connected with the experiences Fyr acquired regarding the weather; sun, plants and weather went hand in hand; for half the year there were good days, the other half less good; it was noticeable too how this changing of the year made itself felt in his own existence.

The first general change he felt after he had come up from the lowlands was that the nights were cold, all the year round; later on he found out that things got worse during half the year; then the days too were cold. It made a very marked difference how high he was on the mountain; it was colder the higher he went, a state of things which for a long time he could not explain, since when he moved upward it was towards the fire; but so it was.

How did Fyr manage to get through the cold nights on the mountain? Well, there was the fire, Gunung Api's warmth; he had to go some way up the mountain, where the cold could be felt, in order to reach this warmth; this contradiction characterized from the first his relations with fire, which from year to year he developed into an art. For he soon learned to retire up the mountain every evening when the cold began to penetrate his coat of hair, right up above the tree limit where the ground was steep and barren, for there he knew it was warm, and he made

himself comfortable for the night in caves under the lava or simply under the lee of a warm block.

These advances to Gunung Api required delicate tact; it would not do to offend or annoy the Old One, even if one were distantly related to him; Fyr was very modest about it and came stealing up in the dusk, on all fours like a dog, not wishing to be seen too clearly; during the night he made himself small behind a warm stone with a vigilant ear, even while asleep, for every rumbling in the interior of the mountain. Of course he did not venture *too* far up the hot, naked floor towards the mouth of the volcano, where the clear glow could be seen shining through rifts in its side; it was sufficient if one had enough radiant heat to be able to sleep as comfortably as in the warmest sunshine in the middle of the day. Still, it was not a bad thing to be as near a glowing crack as possible; one slept all the more quietly for venturing there, since it was certain that, where the red smouldering fire showed through the mountain, no other living thing would come, neither snake nor beast of prey: the gleam of fire kept the night clean about the sleeper, though of course at no small danger to himself. With caution and one eye half-open now and then, Fyr found time after time that nothing happened and came to regard himself as on a tacit peace footing with the volcano. Every time he went to rest he courteously asked permission, and as the mountain did not say No, he took it to mean Yes, and lay down in the pleasant warmth.

And when the sun rose and woke Fyr early on the mountain, he crept down refreshed to the forest after mumbling his thanks to Gunung Api for the night—more and more a matter of form, since the mountain did not seem to hear what was said. During the day it was quite possible he might forget his dependence on old Father Fire up above; but in the evening when the shadows fell and he felt the need of a little warmth and protection again, he

turned his steps in silent diffidence back to the mountain.

Now and then, too, he contributed to the maintenance of these good relations by a gift, according to his means; if he was well fed and supplies were plentiful it was not amiss to bring some little thing to the fire by way of acknowledgment, such as a bird or a fruit, which was dropped into a rift with fire at the bottom. That the mountain accepted small contributions was beyond a doubt; it answered at once with a voluptuous hissing and consumed in a very short time whatever was given it: fruit with leaves, branches and all, it had an appetite for everything. And it could not be denied that there was a wonderful smell, a most delicate savour, about the things the fire ate.

## VII

### FIRE AND MAN

YES, there was no doubt about that, the things the fire had had in its mouth acquired a peculiarly tempting and delicious taste, whether they were fruit, which was made softer and sweeter thereby, or flesh, which gave out a positively sinful incitement in its broiled fragrance. Fyr might sometimes forget to thank Gunung Api for his warmth, but he showed persistence in bringing gifts to the fire and so much sympathy while it ate them that his mouth watered, he slobbered all down himself, and his nostrils dilated till the fire shone right into his head. Would it do to have a taste?

The fire did not always finish its meal, it often left some charred scraps—on purpose, perhaps? Fyr asked politely whether he might, and as he did not get a No he took it to mean Yes and helped himself to the leavings. It was quite a profitable thing to bring presents to the fire.

Fyr had not had much experience of eating meat before he came up the mountain. It was only to be had after forest fires, in circumstances which made its enjoyment a mixed pleasure, as when he had been born—he had heard all about that; then the whole world had offered a banquet of roasted animals which lasted for two days, but on the third the meat had gone off, and the Forest Folk had nearly perished from stench and horror; the whole world had become an abomination to them; so short a step is it from abundance to deadly nausea.

Since then Fyr had tasted fire-sweetened meat after oc-

casional smaller conflagrations which did not spread to the whole forest, and his mouth watered every time he remembered it. Even then there had been some blunting of the deference due to fire when one filched a bit of its meal; the savoury odour of newly roasted cattle on the smoking ground was too irresistible; it penetrated the very palate and positively clouded the judgment; there was really some excuse, and before a man knew what he was doing he would be sitting with the shoulder of a cow in his hands, intoxicated with meat; the fire would have to excuse it.

Besides, was there not a hint in the way the fire made its meal, always leaving something, a nice charred scrap? Was it not actually trying to *teach* men to eat meat in a more proper and decent way than they otherwise knew, well prepared, toasted and blessed by the fire?

Of course in the ordinary way one only got meat in a raw, natural state, as a rule alive; the smaller creatures one ate, nestlings, mice and so on up to the size of a hare, went into the mouth whole, just as they were, and tasted as blood tastes, raw and qualmish; but the delicate roast meat of large animals that had been in the fire was a whole world of new taste; could one possibly be altogether indifferent to it?

Fire was a greedy man with a great range of appetite, it ate everything without exception, the forest as well as the beasts within it. As regards wood, whether fresh or charred, a man could not share its taste; animals, on the other hand, which fire had partly eaten and left in a roasted, half-burnt state as though it could not get any more down—were they to be wasted? was it not something like mistaken modesty, almost a crime, to let them lie?

Experience taught that it was lawful to eat. If one *had* made free with the food of fire and then went in fear of the punishment, and the punishment failed to appear, how was that to be interpreted?

Indulgence in meat in itself made you feel satisfied and

impudent, so that you had less fear of the consequences than if your stomach was empty; and it was asking rather too much if you were to expect punishment when you *hadn't* eaten, so why not help yourself till there wasn't room for a hiccup? then you could await the consequences at your ease; whatever might happen, you were full.

Besides which, the fire as a rule had gone, the blaze was over, when the chance of a bite occurred; for you didn't stand in the path of the wind but away from it, so with the exercise of tact and experience of former occasions you could arrange things quite well with fire.

So far did Fyr's knowledge of fire extend before he betook himself to Gunung Api; it was pretty much the point of view of the Forest Folk: complete dependence on fire and the opportunities of eating roast meat confined to the somewhat rare orgies when, after a volcanic eruption or a lightning stroke, fire made one of its big meals; but on the mountain Fyr established daily and lasting relations with fire, to their mutual advantage, as it seemed to him.

Up in the lava cracks, which were hot and evil-smelling by day and shone with an internal glow by night, the fire led a pinched and smothered life, had nothing to feed upon and never flared up unless it was given something; so Fyr saw to that—where the lava yawned like an open mouth and he could venture near enough without burning the balls of his feet, he threw branches and victuals into it, fruit and an occasional unlucky rabbit, and the fire was always glad to get these things; it answered in a brisk blaze, a suffocating smell, with much voluptuous licking up of what it loved best. As a rule it ate up all his gifts, unless he was leery enough to lay them a little to one side on top of the ashes, so that it had to leave something; it didn't seem to notice this, and so Fyr got his share of the meal. Well, one good turn deserves another—you paid the fire a good price and had a reason-

able profit out of it yourself; if it wasn't satisfied with the bargain, why, it might some day run the risk of going out!

That was it! Not that he was thinking of the big Fire itself, Gunung Api—pray don't think that; but there's fire and fire; the babies it gets, for instance, they are not always so invincible, at any rate while they are small. For it was evident that fire propagated itself and spread; it was not a connected body but a family of many flames and fire spirits; they were born of sparks after being hatched in the glow of Gunung Api, and each of these babies might quite well turn into a whole forest fire, that had been seen before now; the least little wee flame might grow to a terrific size if only it got food enough. But if it got no food, it died; its fate was no different from that of other beings.

So Fyr used to feed the fire up on the mountain, holding branches to it to see what happened; he nursed fire-babies and little by little got an insight into their nature. When a fire had devoured just so much wood as he had given it and got no more, it went out and there was an end of it. If he threw it wood, it was alive and big so long as that wood lasted but shrank up and finally went out when it was eaten up; so it was clear that any fire burning by itself was dependent on just how much it got and in that way also on him who gave it.

If you had dipped a branch in the glowing lava and got a little fire on it, you could therefore quite well take it up and lay it branch and all on the ground, add chips to it, play with it like a fire puppy if you liked and as long as you liked; for if it got too big and dangerous you simply left off adding chips to it, and then what happened? it soon lost its strength if it could not reach anything of its own accord.

To say nothing of water. If there was a puddle among the adjacent rocks one could make the fire very tame; even the glow within the cracks of the mountain side went black and cold when it rained. Filling your hollowed

hands with water you could kill even a fairly big and voracious fire baby on the spot. This playing with fire gave you a feeling that after all you were not absolutely the inferior of Gunung Api and his young.

In the evening when Fyr came up Gunung Api to go to rest on the warm lava floor, he took food for the fire with him, fished up a baby out of one of the crevices and amused himself with it as long as he felt inclined; it gave not only warmth but light, it cast a gleam so that he could see the nearest objects; it was a little cave of light, like a spot of daylight in the midst of the darkness, which kept the night at arm's length. Then he had something warm to eat, sharing with the fire—he found the food and got his share of it nicely done—well, that was how Fyr thought it would work out, so that one day he and the fire would understand and help each other.

Fyr had all along lived alone on the mountain, except for some women who followed him; the friends of his childhood in the jungle stayed down in the lowlands and went about with the tribe, exercising themselves in manliness and developing their voices; but Fyr had now formed an acquaintance to which no one before him had dared to aspire, and he began to have an idea of sharing it with the others in the lowlands. But he would not do that until he had reached such a point that he would not have to bring the tribe up the mountain but could take the fire to them.

Nor could he himself keep up this half day's journey up the steep slope to the warm places; it was too far to carry food to the fire, and there was no forest up there: he would have to fetch the fire down! The place where he wanted to use it was down among the vegetation where his food grew, not on the barren mountain side, and he could do without Gunung Api's warmth at night if he made himself a blaze and thus had fire in another form.

So one day, acting on a sudden impulse but after mature consideration and with the knowledge he had already gained of the nature of fire, Fyr took a burning branch and went down the mountain with it. Had he not hardened himself for years against the overpowering dread inspired by fire and acquired a sure insight into its nature, it would have appeared to him impossible to take its young away, to walk off with it, disappear with it—an unheard-of and presumptuous robbery, but he did it!

And it came off. True, the mountain was shaken to its foundations, emitted thunders and reached out arms of fire right down into the valleys to destroy the robber and all men with him, but this was half a year later; the mountain was slow about it and harmless, since Fyr in the meantime had left the volcano.

And there was no need to dwell there any more! The dependence he had lived in—having to keep always in the neighbourhood of the mountain so as to reach his warm sleeping places at night, a pretty hard lot, not to say bondage, since he could scarcely go more than a day's journey away—this obnoxious dependence was now a thing of the past; he carried his own fire, his own volcano in fact, wherever he chose to take up his abode in the forests round about, had no further need of Father Mountain at all!

So rapid was Fyr's progress after he had walked off with the fire. He knew of course what to do to make it propagate. Having taken it prisoner, with greater danger to his life than if it had been a poisonous snake, he carried it in his hands at the end of a burning branch, brought it as far down as he could and laid it on the ground. Then he fed it as carefully as possible, gave it dainty dry twigs and the tenderest of wood to bite at, until it got strong and blustered quite unpleasantly; then he coolly left off giving it any more until it calmed down again with quietly licking limbs; after that he lighted another long branch and went on with that; and thus he came farther

and farther down the mountain, for Fyr was an artist and knew how fire was to be controlled.

When he had come down the mountain in this way until he found a place which suited him, he made a fire there and let it increase in power. It was incredible how much it could swallow; Fyr dragged up half a forest and threw it into its throat, till it grew almost sky-high and gave out a scorching heat. Fyr walked round and round, staring into its blazing world as though bewitched, forgot his surroundings, received the element into his soul and became a man of fire for the rest of his days.

But when he had feasted his soul with an immense blaze and seen its consuming might, he let it die down, kept it going for days and nights together with sticks, just a little fire; it could live like that too, if only it got a little all the time; it could be made big again whenever he wished.

He could always take young ones out of the fire and feed them up into a whole family; then he could let the mother fire go out and keep her offspring, could add grandchildren and great-grandchildren as often as he liked and to any extent.

Fire was tamed! The blaze that Fyr had kindled never more went cold. From the fire he first brought down all other fires are descended; it gave him young and young again for all the fires beside which he lived, and afterwards, when he had brought fire to his tribe, for the hearth of its every family; and from Fyr's tribe it spread to all others, to the whole Forest Folk, and with them it was carried out into the world as far as men have travelled.

But this brought about a division of the Forest Folk into the one tribe within which fire had been tamed and which had the tradition of its origin, and all the others who borrowed fire from it for household use without taking account of its sacred nature. This state of things set up a profound cleavage of far-reaching significance.

But even those who were acquainted with fire and its use without having an insight into its nature acquired an enormous advantage over all other creatures. For not only could they eat cooked food at any time without its attending dangers, if they simply carried a burning branch with them and fed it and renewed it on the way, but they could go to rest every evening beside a blazing fire; they had *light;* at last they had become masters of the night and its ancient abyss of terrors—beasts that hunted in the darkness and the awful unseen powers that haunted the night but yielded before light and fire.

Gone was the quaking misery of the square at night, when they sat with darkness pressing on their eyeballs and might expect at any moment to be dragged out by the leopard's claw; now they sat by the fire and watched the wild beasts hovering on the edge of the gleam and blinking palely at man's mighty new ally. The great cats sniffed the air with longing in their eyes, the good smell of men was enticing and called up memories, but the fire came in their way; they stood on three legs with fore-paw ready, but without hope, slobbered up the saliva that came into their mouths at the sight of so much well-lighted food so near them, but they were quite unable to enter the magic circle with which the fire surrounded itself at night.

And there sat the little human, cosy and warm, on good and friendly terms with the fire, and even if you please gnawing the bone of a brother of the self-same beast of prey that was prowling around with impotent sidelong glances at the blaze!

But at the same time they were careful to keep the covenant. If the fire was tame and rendered services, it was of course in return for being fed; it must have its offering. Besides wood, which satisfied its coarser appetite, it had to be given flesh at least once a day; and it must be said that the little men were very eager and ready to procure it, if possible several times a day, provided sufficient sacrificial

animals were to be had, seeing that the leavings fell to their share and tasted so gratefully of the fire's lovingkindness.

In the distant tribes, which had received fire at second or third hand or perhaps had half forgotten where it ever came from—most of the Forest Folk had short memories—it might happen that the privilege of the fire as supreme messmate, the whole pious origin of the past, gradually receded into the background; but on the other hand every care was taken that the tribe from which fire came maintained the tradition in full force on behalf of the whole people.

The initiated here, who had their instruction from Fyr, did not neglect to show the fire all the honour due to it for burning, this was their care before all who used the fire; and it was therefore natural for other tribes to honour *them*, the initiates, who kept up the good relations with the Fire Spirit, in place of the spirit itself. Their sacrifices were known to have the right virtue, for which reason it was fair and just to provide them with the sacrificial animals they required; so much could an uninitiated do for the common weal. The tribe of the men of fire therefore never had to trouble itself, but received as a matter of course all the slaughtered animals needed by the fire and for their own consumption; an arrangement of this kind continued in force long after its origin was forgotten; which is what we call a prescriptive right.

But all this lay in the future as part of the vast results connected with fire, as did also the change in the life of the Forest Folk involved by their great consumption of meat, a factor which was the cause of their breaking the peace with the beasts and adopting the life of hunters.

## VIII

### GUNUNG API'S HANDMAIDS

BEFORE Fyr returned with the fire to his tribe in the valleys, he had founded a tribe of his own; this came about almost without his knowing it through his being visited quite often in his solitude by women; at last there was a whole flock of them about him, and he had not the heart to scare them away.

They came of their own accord, and it said much for their tracking instinct that they were able to find him at all; that one should have given any hint to another was scarcely likely; each of them deserved the whole credit herself: astonishing how clever they were on the trail. Yet Fyr thought he had hidden himself well out of the way up on the mountain. He did not know that every morning a glorious song rolled down from the height, as though the clouds were rejoicing, when he greeted the day together with the birds, or he never gave it a thought; but that was what betrayed him; the women followed that wonderful voice and came up to him, torn by the bushes and with wounded feet, and each time he was astonished anew at their unfailing sense of direction.

They were many and very different women who left their tribes in the valley when they heard the sound, and that notwithstanding their tribal chief had a very good organ; the charm of distance was stronger, they could not resist that voice from the mountain and slipped away under the bushes when their owners were not looking, braved the rough ground and the steep climb to reach the voice that sang so sweetly.

Fyr saw the first of them one morning when in an ecstasy of loneliness he had crowed at sunrise almost without knowing it; the sun and the wealth of the world beneath him gushed out of his heart in a song of joy, he stalked about on a high place owning the air and the daylight, it was all his—and then it was that he caught sight of a woman; she was sitting in the grass close by, had come quite quietly, and sat down, with her feet under her and her head bent, her long wild black hair falling over her face.

Hish! Fyr shooed at her, disturbed in his hymn to the sun: what did the thing want, what had she come here for? he clapped his hands to make her fly off; but she didn't move either for his shooing or his clapping, sat quite still fumbling with a blade of grass, made herself as small as possible, nothing but a little stick lying on the ground hidden by hair; she was scarcely there and not the least bit in the way, and then—well, Fyr hadn't the heart to shoo her any more.

Nor was she anything of a nuisance, it couldn't hurt a man if she was sitting in the grass off and on when he happened to turn round and his eye fell on her; as a rule she was forgotten; if he saw her again one day—well, there she was, quiet as a mouse, with her head wrapped in her hair; he got accustomed to her coming.

At last one day she flung all the hair from her face and looked up with dark, frantic eyes; she bleated with closed lips, as though a prisoner were calling in her breast, a prayer from a soul in darkness; hopelessly sunk in a necessity she yet knew not, a hot, mute world inextricably blended of outrage and warmth and craving for both. Then Fyr felt homesick for goodness. He cared no more for joy, unless he could share it with her. From that time he was no longer alone.

Some way up the mountain was a plain, it stood high but was of great extent, a country by itself with a fresh air

and cool open groves; grass grew among the scattered trees, and wild flowers; none knew the place except the beasts and only few of them; it was the home of bees, and here dwelt the lark.

On this grass land it was that Fyr and the woman met, and here they made themselves nests in the grass, hidden from all the world, except from the blue daylight that poured down on them from above. Food was here on every side for the frugal who were content to chew most of the day—this was the seed of the wild corn growing here and there among the grass; you plucked a few ears and rubbed out the grain in the hollow of the hand, blew the husks away and put the fresh, still milky corn into your mouth. Honey you could take from the bees when you had a taste for it, great dripping yellow cakes which you pulled out of hollow trees; the wild apple trees grew on the plain, holding out apples to the passer-by; they were small and hard, but no man had tasted any better.

In the thicket they found raspberries, a fruit they had not known before, and they tempted each other to eat, artfully putting a berry between the lips, the very best, which both must have a taste of; you plucked a lot and got a little, what sort of a precious, provocative fruit could this be? In unity of soul they lingered among the bushes.

The unknown country up there on the mountain had fruits of its own, not like the pulpy overripe ones of the lowlands, dripping with thick juices, begotten of humidity and eternal summer, but small compressed and nourishing things, nothing to look at, like the good grain in the grass, the nuts in the thicket, no bigger than one's nail but mysteriously sweet, a condensation of all kinds of subtle forces which seemed to be in the air here; wild plums that had gathered the morning dew and tasted fresh and sharp as though sated with thunder-showers and cool nights.

They witnessed the fall of the leaf, saw the trees turn

sick and cast off their yellowed foliage until they stood naked and the cold wind blew through their bare branches; they themselves learned what it was to shiver and huddle together towards evening; but then they had the warmth higher up the mountain, the first hearth, and later, when Fyr had tamed the fire, they took it with them wherever they went.

And they witnessed the spring, the rebirth of the trees, when the leaves came again and they turned green in a dewy and fragrant coolness, amidst the play of sun and showers; the appletree blossomed, exhaling freshness, the whole plain was wavy with new green grasses and a wealth of flowers. The wild sheep brought their new-born lambs down from the mountain to the meadows and clear streams; young calves with gristly hoofs took their first clumsy steps in the grass, with a foolish look about the mouth and night and the sky in their eyes. Above the plains hung the lark, rising in song upon bridges of light between showers; the wind and the grass talked together in an everlasting nodding and whispering, and a thousand bees hummed, a long, long hushed colloquy between them and the flowers in one vast drowsy note. Summer established its glory, the grasses shed their pollen and went to seed, the newly fledged nestlings attempted their first flight.

Imperishable is summer, as the poppy—as the poppy which cools its red flames a moment in the breeze and loses them when they are reddest—but is it not always summer when the poppy blooms? The wild young couple decked themselves with the poppy and were made drowsy by its fruit. In the heart of the poppy the seduction of summer lies hid, the brief glow and the long black slumber that follows.

So long as the poppy bloomed, their joy lasted. It unfolded his heart, he walked more warily upon the earth, day and night were to him as a marvel; and she became human, with eyes that saw; it even appeared that she had

speech, a high shrill girl's note that expressed joy; and she drew herself up, no longer creeping bent double through the grass, but sunning herself erect; she accepted admiration like a bottomless bowl, so long as her hour of summer lasted.

That was their sojourn in a land no man yet knew. Without their knowing it they had dwelt in the forecourt of other ages yet to come and of another humanity.

Afterwards they fell back to the lowlands and the monotonous warm forest, and there their own time closed over them again. The heart shut up within him, and she crouched once more in her speechless solitude. But in the downy youngster that one day crawled between them was enshrined their life's marvel and the germ of a new one.

A troop of women followed Fyr when he showed himself in company with the fire to the Forest Folk in the lowlands; their number had increased—how, he didn't know, but supposed that women never came singly, they appeared in swarms after the manner of grasshoppers. To begin with Fyr had really believed it was always one and the same he had with him, so long as they approached him one at a time; the difference was too trifling for him to notice it—and what of it? They were all pretty.

Ah yes, desirable all of them, particularly well furnished as to the body and with rich limbs, plump beyond expression, a delight to the eyes, extraordinarily alluring, every one! How could he reject any of them; how could he say which was which? Seen from the back there was no knowing one from another, there was the same long hair and the same rotundity of the middle which speaks eloquently in favor of a woman even when she turns away. In front they exhibited another cloven roundness, equally charming in all of them and pretty much the same in all: cloven and double they were all over, as though it had really been intended to make two maidens out of the abund-

ant material that went to each, but there had only been a head for one. Mentally they were not to be distinguished one from another; they were just as short of soul as they were long in the hair, without a yesterday and without a morrow, but greedy for the present; if you heard a sudden whirlpool of utterance beside you, you knew it was one of them, a flood of words all at once, all sluices open and on again, that was their way. Their behaviour towards men and towards each other was entirely different, they had two kinds of manner; but Fyr never got the bearings of more than the one side of their wiles.

He had no idea how many there were in the troop; his notions of number were based on the more thrifty heavenly bodies, two or thereabouts: the sun and moon and some particular big star among the rest; to count the stars themselves, on the other hand, was beyond a man's power, of them there was a whole field; and such things as the sea-sand, swarms of bees, the tides, floods, rain, wind and other obscure natural forces were not to be counted but to be taken precisely for the unaccountable things they were. Nor was he aware of ever having seen them all together at one time and in one place; who was to have precedence was presumably a matter they settled amongst themselves; to judge by what he heard it was not always arranged amicably; occasionally moans and the sound of hollow blows like thumping a cow reached Fyr's ears from behind the bushes, and many a time he found himself embracing a panting, perspiring maiden with a shamefully scratched face.

Gradually, as they settled down, it came about as a matter of course that the women took over the feeding of Fyr; they had been used to this in the valleys and felt the need of having some one to live for; their only trouble was that there were so many of them to do it, each one would have preferred to wear herself out in feeding him alone. They fought in secret for the work, gouged out each other's

eyes with their fingers, were always tearing at each other's poor hair and ramming their knees into each other's stomachs to keep each other away from the Man; but whoever might be victorious, the food always reached Fyr's lips whether he was hungry or not; his maintenance was assured, no unpleasant thing for a hermit in the wilderness and a great saving of time, which again was to the advantage of his tranquillity and placid meditation.

For he was occupied all day long with his arts of fire, making paths in the dust with his finger, signs of power which from his frequently looking up at the heavenly bodies were thought to be associated with them; evidently he was giving them their direction and keeping order in heaven, without him the whole thing would soon tumble down, so he had to be kept well nourished.

Often Fyr was entirely wrapped up in his researches into the secrets of Nature, which only revealed themselves reluctantly and after long study on his part; he barely noticed that the food was there, absently took a bite of it, chewed and went on pondering a riddle—a little cry of satisfaction that God was eating might then draw his attention from the food to the hand that offered it, and from the hand to the woman—was she there again, the beauty, whichever one it might be?

That his company of women took him for Gunung Api, the great Fire Spirit himself, the God of the Forest Folk, had long been clear to him. They saw that he ruled over the fire, and it needed no effort of thought to attribute its power to him. Towards the fire itself, which they approached in his company and under his protection, they showed no sign either of contrition or of devotion; whether it was that they had no power of imagination or were unable to form an idea of spirit, they regarded fire with a certain stiffness, avoided it as they avoided water, well knowing that both were injurious to the skin; if they went too near the coals they blew on their fingers, though without its mak-

ing them any the wiser next time; but more than a smart they were incapable of feeling for the element. No, to them fire existed only as the effulgence it shed over its author and gloriously bearded exorcist; by its light they worshipped Fyr!

Of a surety he was Gunung Api. Had they not heard him singing on high, roaring with the very bull's voice of the mountain? Did not everybody speak of Gunung Api as a great male being, fire and voice and violence in one? Well then, that couldn't be any other than Fyr!

Therefore while nourishing Fyr as they nourished their own heart it followed as a matter of course that his fire must lack nothing either. Thus much the women were quick to learn under Fyr's tuition, to keep up the fire by means of the things it loved; above all wood, of which it could never have too much, but also with other offerings, fruit, small animals, eggs and the like, whatever one could pick up. Voracious he was, that fire, they grudged him all the good things he ate; yet it did not all go off in smoke, for Fyr raked the lion's share out of the ashes with a stick, luckily, and devoured it himself; it made them so glad to see their blessed great roaring bull buffalo of a God deign to keep up his strength.

Thus it was that the women became tenders of the fire, whether by day or night, Gunung Api's ever vigilant and responsible handmaids.

He was an insatiable master; he had to be supplied unceasingly. From this time forth the women had a new burden added to their everlasting young one; they were never seen without a bundle of firewood on their backs.

The Man, the creator, was meditating upon new things; having given his family fire, his next intellectual exploit was to be weapons; but the women entered upon their long labour of patience, their night-watching, their life of repetition upon repetition with closed soul and an inexhaustible heart, by the fireside.

## IX

## THE FIRST HUNTERS

THE sensation was immense among the Forest Folk when Fyr came down from the mountain with the fire and it was rumoured that, accompanied by a band of women, he was going about the valleys with a conflagration which was said to be tame and followed him wherever he went.

Did a fire burn along beside him or behind him in the grass, did it stop when he stopped and lie down at his feet perhaps? Could it also go against the wind? Did it take a little run into the forest and eat up a few trees and then come back to him when he called it? Such were the questions of the ignorant who had not yet seen the sight; but those who had were able to explain that the fire did not run loose, it did not move of its own accord, Fyr had it lying on the ground and in some way or other held it fast; it was his prisoner, and although it behaved in a very lively fashion, hitting about with long fiery arms and sending masses of smoke up to the sky, it had no idea of escaping, it stayed on the spot as long as Fyr wished and was obedient to him; unparalleled was the power he possessed! But when he wanted to move to another place he made the fire small, took it on the end of a branch and could go long distances with it before he laid it down again and fed it into a blaze.

Herein lay something of the secret, in a purely outward sense; in itself of course the whole matter remained inexplicable, Fyr's own most intimate private property, how

he had made friends with the fire; but it was by feeding it he held it fast. It was given wood all the time and now and then an animal to keep it quiet; that was the first principle, simple enough in itself, which had to be grasped.

It was a long time before ordinary mortals ventured at all to approach Fyr and his dangerous companion. It would not do to come erect; they fell flat a long way off and crawled on their stomachs, on no account empty-handed, naturally a gift had to be brought, branches and wood for the fire, some beast or other one had been lucky enough to catch, maybe a pig—and it wasn't so difficult to snatch one out of a litter—many a man owed a good reception to the pig he brought, the fire appreciated that dish, roared high and gave out a beautiful smell when a pig was offered; Fyr himself announced his approval and favoured the choice, so pigs were a popular gift. The final approach to the sanctuary where the fire burned and Fyr went about it as an adept, attended by his female initiates, this final approach was made not only crawling on one's stomach but with one's face down on the ground so as not to look into the fire and annoy it by inquisitive staring, possibly with injury to one's sight; with eyes to the ground you wriggled up, pushing the sacrifice before you with your hands, until it was taken and you could turn round, get up and scamper back into safety. So hard was it to get used to the living incarnate Gunung Api, even though it was not the Mountain in his own all-consuming person, but only one of his ardent young. Respect for Fyr was commensurate therewith.

But custom dulls all feeling; if you see a fire day after day and have proof, incontrovertible proof that it is tame, you can't keep on quaking before it. Some could, those whose susceptibilities were determined once for all by ancestors and their experience; when they saw the fire they had no peace, couldn't hold themselves, their strength failed them just when they needed it, their knees gave way

and they ran for their lives at the best pace they could muster. That kind never got any nearer to the fire and were not to share in a new age; they would eat cold food the rest of their days as their fathers had done before them, that was good enough for *them!*

But then there were others, the young men of the tribes round about; they got used to Fyr and his fire just a little too quickly, came swaggering up with their inquisitive looks and had to be given a physical lesson in propriety; Fyr had to go so far as to throw a burning brand at them to get them weeping on all fours; a stiff-necked generation, but even impudence has its bounds. When they showed a sense of decorum they might be allowed to come with offerings; and in a round about way, through the handmaids, they might in return come in for a scrap of the fire's meal, a roast pig's trotter or the like, conveyed out of the sanctuary, covertly of course—that kept them hanging about for ever; nothing they had eaten had had such a wonderful taste, all other food paled before it!

Fyr's first congregation came to consist of a mob of these young vagabonds from all the tribes around, with minds open to novelties and just the right degree of recklessness; they always had a "Gunung Api take me" or other unseemly oath on their lips, but could be depended upon if they were put on the right track; from these Fyr trained his first hunters.

For the supply of offerings soon began to fall off, there were limits to the kind of game that let itself be taken casually with the hands; it was true that man lived in profound peace with most of the beasts, but few of them allowed direct contact and not one would let itself be dragged off voluntarily; you had to take their lives first and that was not so easy a matter; you might kill them with a stone, that would answer once or twice in a herd, but then the rest became uneasy and would not let you come to close quarters any more. Formerly men had been able

to wander about among the dense herds of wild cattle, deer and horses, shoulder to shoulder with them, and neither took any notice of the other; but when the demand for animals became brisk, they quickly began to adopt another attitude. It was clear that more drastic measures were needed and their capture would have to be put on a systematic basis, if the burnt offerings were to be kept up; the first necessity was implements.

And this is where Fyr's prolific brain began to breed.

Fire and the hearth advanced many things. Down here in eternal summer men had as yet no need of protection from the weather, but they were made safe at night against wild beasts, and they had acquired a taste, not to be eradicated, for cooked meat; another important thing was that with fire came a quieter life, the opportunity for self-communing. They were forced to remain in one spot, at any rate so long as the fire was burning; they could carry a torch about but not a hearth; that demanded permanence. The long evenings when Fyr sat by the fire taught him to devote time and attention to hunting gear, now that there was a use for it; from a co-operation between the insatiableness of the fire and the human appetite—consumption in a new style—proceeded a new art which blossomed in man's first weapon.

Hitherto the only implements—weapons when occasion arose—the Forest Folk had known were the staff and the stone. The staff was a branch picked up by chance with which the Man armed himself, an inventiveness which made him leader of the herd; it was a good friend to have on the trail, it reached farther than one's arm, gave a blow hard as a fist, and if pointed was useful for stabbing, but would also make a hole when blunt if used with sufficient force. As a beginning Fyr improved the staff; he put its point in the fire and hardened it, having the fertile idea that the point must be endowed by the fire with a deadly force

through being dipped in it; and he was right, spears of this kind, for which long, straight and slender pieces of wood were to be chosen, did not fray up at the end when they had been in the fire, but kept a hard point. Experience showed that they would even go through oxhide if thrust by a powerful arm, they brought down big game; here Fyr's expectations were realized: the spear that had been hardened in the fire carried with it in a sort of metaphorical sense, but effectively, the murderous qualities of fire. Fyr did not keep this discovery to himself but imparted it to all who would learn; the more men with spears the better prospect of meat.

What did it matter if Fyr put weapons in the hands of his fellow-men, when in the same breath he was after something new, keeping his start? While everybody was coming to him for spears, thinking the whole science of arms was exhausted when you had such a thing in your hand, Fyr was well on the way to thinking out the axe!

This occurred to him as an intimate union of staff and stone, obvious enough but never thought of by any before him. There was the stone, it lay in the hand itself, man was born so to speak with a stone in his hand and an evil look—his aim: how far could he reach with it, either in his hand, when he could keep it, or by throwing, when he would lose it and so ought to have several by him? Throwing stones was an art; women never learned it, they swung with a stiff arm, couldn't get rid of the stone; but there were men who had trained themselves to throw with a jerk of the elbow and a sure eye, and they could bring down a bird on the wing; the stone, you might say, was a tooth far out where one's own tooth could not reach. For cracking nuts the stone was a good thing, and if it had a sharp edge you could file through pretty tough fruit shells with it or cut an animal open, but it was pure chance what you found. However, stones became sharp by being broken;

if you struck two together and they fell in pieces you might often get a good sharp one that would serve you a long time. That was their knowledge of the use of stones; it had come about of itself and was common to all, even the women employed sharp stones in preparing food—the ones the men had thrown away as useless; and what did women want with new ones, weren't they born to drudgery?

The hard, brittle flint had long ago been discovered as the best stone for a tool, it split up easily when struck and gave very sharp edges; in shape the raw blocks of flint reminded you of human heads, white-haired old men; there was a feeling of kinship in using flint. It had a ring about it, keen and annealed it was, every flake of it sprang out and bit, drew blood, it thirsted to pierce and stain itself red . . . if staff and stone could but be made to unite, they would surely breed murder.

Cunningly Fyr began to try his hand at what lay in his head—how to get the flint made fast at the end of the stick; thus the connection was to be brought about, the bit of the stone indissolubly wedded to the range and swing of the pole—but how? Other men looking on at his attempts, leaning on the spears he gave them, shake their heads and smile at one another behind their hands: No, now the Fiery One is on the wrong track; what does he think he's doing? They see him lay cudgel and stone together and ponder—is it anything that wants a lot of thought, can anybody expect the stone to grow on to the stick of its own accord? Then it would have to have a mouth to bite itself fast, or the stick would have to gape and close on it—no, the Fiery One is wasting his time!

But Fyr stuck to it, trying over and over again; and one day after countless attempts he actually showed a cudgel which had a heavy, pointed flint made fast at one end; he struck with it and the stone did not come out, struck hard, snapped trees with it, the men round him quivered

under the eyes, it dazzled them—it's dangerous, very dangerous, this new thing the Fiery One has made, they see that at once.

How had he managed it? Well, that was a thing they had explained to them and still did not grasp, they saw with their own eyes how it was done and were no wiser. Fyr had fingered his way to the art of binding, of getting two things to hang together by the help of a third; he made use of long, thin, tough things like hair, sinews or gut, and laid them about the objects to be joined in a very complicated and elaborate manner—for they might try to do it after him, twist the thong a few times round, and the whole thing fell apart again as soon as they let go; but Fyr's held, he had his own secret, nothing more nor less than the knot!

That was the first axe. Nor did Fyr keep to himself the advantage this gave its possessor; he passed on the axe to the young and energetic men of the tribes and charged them to become good hunters. They came to take lessons of him and either received an axe of his own making or in some cases got so far as to make one themselves on his pattern. The art of binding was difficult; besides dexterity it required considerable maturity of thought, there was a mass of things to be kept in the head, the practical principle of the knot gave them a headache, and they had to sit and rest with hand to brow before they were finished.

While the axe was now spread abroad among most of the Forest Folk and kept by them in precisely the form in which they received it—for just as it was, it bit well—the source had not dried up in Fyr's fertile brain; he was quick to see that there was more than *one* weapon and implement in the new combination. If you made the shaft short with a broad, heavy stone at the end, you had the axe, which was good for hewing; but if you made the shaft long and let the stone lashed to it take the form of a sharp point, then you had an improved spear, keener and more

penetrating than before. This new invention he also passed on to the Forest Folk.

And now he thought he had done something. Now axe and spear could work for him in the hands of the Forest Folk: had he not secured the fire and his own influence for long years to come? He was by no means blind to the power he had placed in the hands of the tribes; they were many; many axes and spears now against one—but had he not the fire, was he not the fire itself, or the next thing to it? The tribesmen believed he was and would go on believing it, even if he voluntarily undertook to convince them of the true state of affairs; the women believed it, everybody believed it and *wished* to believe it; he was not far from believing it himself. He was not Gunung Api for nothing. In the axe he had made for his own use, which he wielded as a master, not only for striking but for throwing and hitting the mark, in that axe all were agreed that the lightning dwelt, they all feared it more than an ordinary axe, it was the fiery bolt of Gunung Api!

But chiefly his power rested on his possessing the source of fire. His was still the only hearth, but even when he had given the tribes fire, its secret should not go with it; only his sons should know that, they were to inherit his power. And the secret was that he could at any time renew the fire, even if the hearth should go out. The others might receive fire of him, but not the source of fire; that remained in his head; if his hearth went out he knew the way to a whole mountain of fire.

In the midst of the plain burned the hearth, and from every side the Forest Folk came crawling on their bellies with offerings to Gunung Api; so absolute and supernatural was Fyr's power.

But the beasts, what did they say? Little cause had they to be content with the new order of things; it was they who furnished the sacrifices. The peace between men and beasts, formerly as widespread as that among the beasts

themselves, was now altogether denounced, and that by what one would have thought the weaker party. The little dancing, chattering forest man had turned uncannily silent; he was beginning to kill off more and more animals of every kind, had power in a way difficult to understand over those which were much bigger and stronger than himself, even to the elephant, unapproachable through his very size.

The ruminants held their peace, they were accustomed already to pay tribute to the flesh-eaters; silently the stag dropped with cleft skull and a spear through him; formerly he died by claw or fang and saw his creeping enemy at the drinking places or in the long grass, now they came towards him walking upright, when he had fallen and could rise no more, they broke into their human laughter and struck him in the eyes; death was more merciful than they. The grass-eaters held aloof from man, first at arm's length, then just as far as they had learnt a spear could fly; but at last they avoided the very scent of men miles away, it was only possible to approach them against the wind and in the deepest silence.

The power of the beasts of prey was gone; they no longer helped themselves to a man at any time of the day or night; hard and deadly things came flying at them now, the issue was decided at a distance before one came to grips; they could bite through the air, these bipeds, they let fly things which did damage; the flesh of the little humans had quite lost its delicate savour, and they comforted themselves in unfriendly fashion. If you tried to steal upon them at night you found them banded together with fire and had to go your ways looking like a fool; better to keep away from them altogether. Soon however the tables were turned; it was the man who came on, a lot of them together and cunningly, from every side, with long, dangerous things in their hands; and then it actually happened far too often that the carnivorous beast went into the stomach of what he would have regarded as his breakfast.

The tiger sneezes when he scents men, they have a ranker smell than before, an odour of fire clings to their hair; the tiger too goes to windward and gives men a wide berth.

But the time was coming when safety could not even be secured by avoiding close quarters with men and looking out for their pointed things; they pursued the beasts with other arts, dug pits for them; wherever you went there was a danger that the earth might sink under your paws; the forest was scarcely a place to live any more. In that way even the elephant met his fate, a sad blow to the dignity of all animals, and if the shrewd and mighty beast succeeded in digging himself out of the pitfall with his tusks, there was next time a sharp stake, hardened in the fire, at the bottom, and then he stayed there; certain people have enterprising brains, and how fond they must be of meat!

The wild horses suffered annoyance from the wicked hunters, who in large numbers tried to encircle them, armed with poles and yelling loudly; so the animals made up their minds as one horse to fly from this rabble, quit the country, since it was no longer fit to live in, and they made off in full gallop towards one side which was not closed by the polemen—just what the hunters wanted them to do. Here the ground fell away abruptly in a steep bluff, not to be seen from above, and down plunged the whole mighty galloping herd, one wave of animals on top of the other, down on to the stony ground below. Not one escaped. So many horses were killed that day that afterwards their bones were piled high on the spot—all for the sake of the few carcasses the hunters could manage to devour before the whole mass went rotten.

Oh yes, the beasts had reason to fear the fire's ally and bloody purveyor.

Gone was the peace of the evergreen forests before the Ice Age, where grazing beasts roamed in herds upon the plains and men came out of the groves and mixed with

them without fear on either side. An ancient friendship existed between the playful calves of the ruminants and the restless, dancing, variety-loving humans; upon the pastures in the morning of the ages children, puppies and foals rolled about together in downy, sunlit gambols. They had to part. It was written in their fate that they should meet again, but that lay far ahead, and bitter trials, a hard schooling, awaited creation first.

The transformation of the animals had been accomplished in the Forest of Change, so far as eternal summer and easy days could effect it; they had attained their final form according to the conditions in which they lived, according to their place of abode, their food and their mutual relations; deer and cattle in the open forests, with beasts of prey lurking near; on the steppes the whole family of horses, plants with bulbous roots for overcoming barren seasons, and rodents underground which lived thereon; goats and chamois high on the mountains and highest of all the reindeer, seeking peace, but the wolverene finds them there; in the marshes buffaloes and swine, with the wolf round about among the rushes; the otter comes upon the salmon in the rushing rivers, and out in the sea the seal thrusts his man's head out of the waves, and the whale spouts from among shoals of herring into a cloud of gulls; Nature had reached an equilibrium. But now other forces were to intrude upon Nature.

Wherever the beasts might hide, however they might guard against one another, thereby becoming the beasts they were—against man they had no guard, he found them all, and everywhere. A mark of blood was set between man and all other living creatures. Man had entered upon his existence as a hunter; the elements hunted him, and he together with fire hunted the beasts; their life became a hunt for coming milleniums.

It happened thus since it could not happen otherwise; there was that in the air which caused man to draw near

to fire, at the expense of all other living things. None could prevail any more against these bipeds who made themselves bigger than they were by all kinds of unbestial arts. Yet the day was not far off when man would turn his weapons against himself and become his own bitterest enemy.

## X

### THE SACRIFICE

FYR reached the summit of his power while he was still a young man; his leadership was founded on something irresistibly new, rather than on an accumulation of experience as in the case of the elders who had formerly been at the head of the Forest Folk. The experience of the old men was no longer at all necessary, all that they knew as a defence against night and famine was superfluous now the fire was there; a single burst of light in man's soul had put all their lifelong bundles of memory to shame. And Fyr did not rule by violence and brutal punishments; his glory diffused power of itself, all submitted willingly to him and his fire.

Fyr ruled bountifully, under his leadership the Forest Folk entered upon an unbroken series of festivals. He reduced the sacrifices to a system, introduced fixed rules for feeding the fire, together with man's occasional participation therein; the whole according to mysterious covenants with the Powers of Fire whom he alone represented; covenants the origin of which was afterwards forgotten but which were kept, all the more stubbornly the less their reason was remembered.

The sacrifice, as instituted by Fyr, rested upon a simple conception of fire as the consuming spirit; at every sacrificial repast it was fire that sat in the high seat, and that men were permitted to partake rested upon an equally simple fundamental revelation, namely, that if one asked the fire whether one might take a bit, it said nothing, which was interpreted as Yes, whereupon one fell to on the

fire's leavings. Fyr was always seen to mumble a holy prayer at the opening of every banquet, not a long prayer but undoubtedly an important one, since he never omitted it; thus Fyr asked permission. For a moment he politely turned his ear, in case the fire should say something, and if he did not hear a No—indeed, it had never been heard—and the meat was done, they proceeded to fall to.

What and how much the fire left was a matter of discretion, and here Fyr's insight and sense of fairness were obviously the best guide; in course of time he arrived at an understanding with the fire than which nothing could be more favourable to both parties. The tastes of fire could be ascertained by purely empirical observations; they differed essentially from man's, since it preferred wood to fruit and old, dry wood to green; withered grass and leaves it swallowed in a blazing roar, of that kind of thing it could never have enough. As regards meat experience showed that fire devoured the skin, bones and entrails of the sacrifice with apparently just as good an appetite as it had for the other parts; and, if its digestion was so excellent, why then the tender meat, the shoulders and all the rest was left for the sacrificer and the pious partakers of the meal. If you laid all the meat in one heap and all the bones and skin in another, pointed to them alternately and asked the fire which heap it would have, it said nothing, which was interpreted to mean that you could make the choice yourself. This form also was gone through by Fyr at every sacrifice; they saw him mumble and point and understood that a holy covenant was being concluded between him and the fire. Whereupon they did all honour to the fire, ate as long as they could, till they were full with the last lump of fat plugging their gullet; oh yes, they were ready enough for the sacrifice, both early and late.

Three times a day Fyr ordained the sacrifices, since for some reason unexplained to the others he associated the

essence of fire and of Gùnung Api with the sun, in itself a reasonable idea but too abstruse to be followed by the general run of the Forest Folk: if respect was to be paid to the sun at its rising and setting as well as in the middle of the day, when it was at its highest, all one could say was that this fell in very naturally with man's desire to take something, when he woke, when the forenoon began to seem long, and before he went to rest; the inner sacred significance of the mealtimes might be left to the Fiery One and his sun.

But not only at the ordinary sacrifices thrice daily did Fyr share meals with his ardent Powers; at other fixed seasons, which might be rather far between, he held great extraordinary sacrificial solemnities, on the occasion of the moon's return, for instance; he also instituted huge meat offerings for what he called the Year and the Solar Solstice; the most popular in every way were however the moon festivals, then there were singing and dancing with a will!

Here a tradition from the past came in; the men of old time had been used to meet at the full moon and delight themselves with song and the sweet sound of hollow trees; now great reeking holocausts were added, a huge bonfire in the midst of the congregation and as many offerings as could be provided, if possible a whole roast elephant, taken in a pit, as the chief dish, or a drove of wild cattle that had been chased over a precipice. Stupendous was then the gorging, well greased were the throttles, down went blood pancakes, baked in the ashes, well charred meat and browned fat one way, and up came a full-throated soulful yell the other; wits took fire under pressure of swelling veins, flowers of speech revealed themselves in their naked splendour, abundance begat eloquence and profusion song —now the dance is not far off.

The old paralysing influence of fire on savage nerves changes into excitement and a breathless craving for motion, now that men no longer lose their wits with fear at sight of

the element; no more falling on their faces, they dare go round the fire, go round it many times, half afraid and wholly joyful; they go in a magic circle around the Hot One holding each other's hands, bawling ecstatically, homage and possession in one breath, and this is no brief performance, they delight in dragging it out; the whole livelong night they circle round the fire, shouting their love and gratitude; one will devoutly dip a lump of tallow in it and lick it up when it is nice and smells of burning, and then join hands again with his pious brother and go round the blaze with well-greased gums and a simple hymn of praise on his lips, the joyful howl without words but given with the full force of the lungs and with endless repetition. With a yell in unison to the fire and the moon the dance is kept up all night long, till sunrise appears and it is time to think about *its* morning sacrifice, and a little bit for one's self after so much exhausting worship.

This led to sacred fire-dances in which the whole Forest Folk took part, with imitations of the fire, mimic dances; they flared up and down like fire, threw out their arms and suggested huge armfuls of smoke; they sang the crackling song, roared and whistled with ugly noises, they carried torches, fire-maddened and going on tip-toe the whole night through; in short, they *were* fire, they received it in their souls and gave back its nature in the form of song. The song was a simple one, repeating in an ecstatic roaring chorus a single word, the name of fire, O Fire! the whole night long—lovely! Refrain: A bit of meat and a lick of the fingers! Good, good, O Elephant, tasteth thy foot when thou hast trodden the fire, O Fire, and art passed into eternity; easy be thy rest in my stomach! Yes, there was dancing, singing and feasting with a vengeance.

The festivals however were by no means sheer gluttony and nothing else; the happy eating songs and the transports over the fire contained the germ of a dawning poetry, and Fyr had discovered that both fire and man could live by

other things besides those which merely gave work for the teeth—perfume, for instance: the fire evinced a spiritually loftier enjoyment when you gave it certain plants, spiced bark and resin; then the fire sweated voluptuously and smoked so sweetly that a man could not but rejoice over it. On this account Fyr instituted various temperance offerings, where only the smoke that ascended to heaven was regarded as the actual gift; nor was the offering altogether lost upon the sacrificer: in hours of repletion there was a certain gratification in breathing in the spicy smoke and coughing and expanding the soul in flights of fancy while taking one's ease.

Reverently the Forest Folk witnessed Fyr's smoky arts; here it could be seen without any effort of thought how fire and its great adept combined to produce clouds! That he kept up the whole universe in this way there could be no doubt at all.

On the night of the great festivals, when men went in a ring about the fire, the beasts formed a ring outside again, but far, far off; still, they had to see what was going on, why it was they were all to die. And then they heard the Forest Folk's chorus of incantation around the fire and were just as wise as before; the elephant appeared at the edge of the wood and stood there swaying his head, swaying his legs in a checked movement; he was wise but had here come to the limit of his wisdom; the tiger, dazzled, grinned his vexation, a grin he has worn ever since, the grin of a shattered power; the bull stood with slobbering mouth and glared; all the beasts fell into a deeper dumbness, blinked their eyes slowly, seeming to understand that they looked without seeing. Yes, they were left behind, and those of them who were to regain their place another time would not even then know what was happening to them. Only the swine went about his business without forebodings, rooting in the ground with his snout; he was not far wrong in fattening himself, thus he remained centred in his destiny.

From the first hearth, the place of Fyr's fire, a sanctuary developed. It was modest enough to begin with, the bare fire on the bare earth; but it is a question whether greater veneration has surrounded any consecrated place before or since.

To the same extent however as men's terror of fire itself wore off through daily familiarity, the symbols and mysteries with which it was surrounded were multiplied. Fyr saw to this; it grew out of the basis of his relations with fire—that one good turn deserves another. It gave him power, and he saw to its maintenance.

It was to have an honourable dwelling; Fyr built a pile of stones for it, in remembrance of the mountain from which it had come, an altar, a little image of Gunung Api; and round about the altar he placed things which he supposed would delight the fire, skulls and horns of sacrificed animals, so that it might always live in the idea of big game even if it had to be content with smaller for its daily food, when the supply of meat was short and partakers of the sacred meal were many.

Rightly viewed, if the fire got the taste that was its share while making the meat tender, and no more, the odour and the smoke in other words, might not that be sufficient in the ordinary way? Fire seemed to be able to live on an image, as it were, to receive nourishment from the indwelling spirit of a thing without demanding the thing itself.

The fact was that Fyr sometimes happened upon stones which the hand of Nature had fashioned in a certain likeness to animals or animal's heads; it occurred to him that they might please the fire, besides saving the trouble of procuring a corresponding living victim. He made the trial, set up a stone near the fire which appeared to him to resemble a stag's head, distantly but unmistakably, and in order to make the likeness clearer he bellowed and strutted like a challenging stag; then he asked the fire whether the

offering was to its taste, and as it made no answer the matter was settled.

To give the image to the fire as direct food would of course have shown a gross lack of imagination, for it was precisely in the contemplation of the image that the fire must be assumed to find edification; it was therefore necessary to preserve it in order that the edification might be of a permanent nature; Fyr set up the stone before the fire and his own soul was actually full of stag every time he saw it, so he was here on the right road to satisfying the fire in a higher and essentially nobler sense.

The image of a stag was not the end of it; Fyr found so many other stones which to a creative eye might look like animals; a weighty round stone with a hint of trunk could easily be recognized as an elephant; almost any clumsy-looking stone passed for a cow, and of that sort of cattle he could get as many as he wanted. Fyr set up a whole animal kingdom about the fire, all the way round, a sacred circle, and these stones, which were to all intents and purposes the animals themselves, were presumed to be taken by the fire as an emblematical assurance that it was always kept supplied.

Yes, and if the likeness was *too* distant there was no harm in helping it out a little, with the free hand of the artist, so that the animal stood out better from the casual stone; an original resemblance was after all unnecessary, you could engrave the picture of any animal you liked on the first stone you happened to pick up, wild horses and buffaloes so true to life that it made the mouth water to look at them—and after all, why must it be a stone, since the spirit was in the image and not in the stone? you could conjure up an animal where you pleased, the soul was in the line, and if you had that you had the whole animal, in so far as it was a question of having it in the spirit.

In dealing with fire, which was willing to feed in such a roundabout fashion, this was a fruitful art; by its help

one could rejoice the fire at any time with the outlines of a meal which one was saved the trouble of giving it in the flesh or to which from considerations of health one treated one's self. The fire of course was never grudged wood for its daily needs; that was the women's business.

This then was how the Fiery One had arranged things: the women carried wood to the fire and the whole jungle folk were out hunting early and late to provide offerings for the fire, which was however quite content with the game in effigy; what finally fell to Fyr's share was apparent with increasing clearness in his figure, as time went on he developed into a regular Gunung Api, a sitting mountain of fat.

But after most of the people had got used to fire and all the tribes had been given their own hearths, which they kept themselves and to which they made suitable offerings—Fyr's fire of course receiving the chief sacrifice—Fyr together with his original hearth moved into a cave and there established a great sanctuary.

The cave lay in a rocky cliff and was both intricate and gloomy, you had to go through wet galleries before finally catching sight of the fire in the interior; here Fyr dwelt in awful greatness with the fire, the old holy ancestral fire, father of all other fire; here he had made pictures on walls and roof of all the beasts of the hunt for the edification of the fire, and here he received offerings.

Yes, the Fiery One was an artist; what he created in the spirit, *was*. He had surrounded himself with a reality that was entirely his own, here he was master; for the reality outside he no longer had much thought.

But one day Gunung Api spoke.

Long had the mountain kept quiet, so long that the Forest Folk had almost forgotten his power and attributed it to others in the meantime; he merely smoked as was his

custom and carried on warfare with the rain, flashed lightnings through the clouds, muttered too now and then as he always had done. But suddenly one day, without warning, he shook himself in his foundations, and that so violently that huge masses of rock came leaping down his sides, the water splashed out of the lakes and the trees rocked in the forest; whole tracts of it shifted a pace away, as though the forest thought of moving off; deep cracks opened in the ground and swallowed up streams, it was a frightful disturbance. This did not last long, but afterwards a grinding and grating went on inside the mountain, daylight vanished in gloom, the lightning flashed hither and thither, and the thunder rolled, not in single claps but all the time like a vast continuous booming; at any instant a forest fire might break out, the world's last day was at hand.

That day Fyr was sacrificed.

Hastily, by adding one thing to another, but above all hastily, his fate was decided.

To begin with, he was not himself unaffected by the disaster; a part of the sacred cave in which he lived had collapsed. Nobody was hurt, a dozen women were buried in one of the galleries, but it was a bad sign; *was* he really invulnerable, was it he or another that was Gunung Api?

Furthermore, he had bolted out of the cave with the remnant of his womenfolk at his heels in a yelping stampede, when he might have been expected to calm and reassure the rest; worse still, this Fiery One had been seen in a more than human attitude on the ground, lying on his belly, precisely like the others, clutching after something to hold on to when the earth was heaving and jumping up and down—it was too obvious, *he* did not set the earth in motion, he was not even able to stand upright on it!

When the first alarm had subsided and there seemed to be a pause in Gunung Api's wrath, the cooler heads among

the Forest Folk tried in all haste to make up their minds what was to be done. The mountain must be appeased, and that instantly. They had taken in enough of Fyr's preaching to know that the aim of fire, as of all other creatures, was food, whence the sacrifice; if there was thunder in the air or the volcano was threatening, anybody might see that it was meat it was after, and it usually got it; but now Gunung Api was angry, a whole forest of animals would hardly be enough to cool his lust, it would take a peculiarly precious dish; and then at the same instant the thought struck their collective mind as the sole means of redemption that it was Fyr himself the fire demanded.

Beasts were not good enough, it wanted men, the whole Forest Folk; still better, the first among them; that was it, mankind in one person, the intercessor between the Powers of Fire and man, and verily, what Gunung Api wanted he should have!

Ancient cruelty secretly revealed itself side by side with the dry commonsense conclusions laboriously reached by the Forest Folk; Fyr had ruled frivolously, diffusing joy around him; now there was an end of folly, he was to be put to the test. Who was he, when it came to the point, this man who gave himself out to be Gunung Api? it would be seen whether he was not just an ordinary mortal.

What things they had quietly submitted to from that quarter!—slaved for him, hunted for him, and *how* had he discharged his stewardship? He who should have intervened between Gunung Api and mankind, had they been able to rely on him? And when he had given the fire skin and bones instead of meat and kept the tit-bits for himself, put off the heavenly Devourer with images, spiritual victuals—might not *that* be the reason why the whole Forest Folk were now threatened with destruction? Into the fire with him, and let Gunung Api eat *him!*

What had they not passed over in silence, when this vagabond claiming to be a god had told monstrous tales

about the order of the world as it had revealed itself to him in so-called solitude up on the mountain! He had asserted, as a result of direct observation of heaven and earth, that the day was not light in itself, it was because the sun shone; as though anybody with the use of his senses couldn't see that it was the other way about; the day of course was light and the sun borrowed its splendour from it. And he asserted further that the sun was a spirit of the same kind as that which manifested itself in fire and in Gunung Api, in the lightning, perhaps it was even the greatest and highest of all fire spirits, since it lived in heaven itself and only seemed smaller because it was so high up—did any one hear the like? when everybody was fully convinced, as you could *see* for yourself, that the sun was a crab-apple. On to the pyre with him!

Oh yes—and it was he who went about with the absurd story that the forms you saw in the water when you leaned over it were not people at all but only an illusion, one's self seen as it were in an image—he and his images!—It was rather too strong that he should deny what was perfectly clear from observation and what was vouched for by older men than he—up and burn him!

No doubt they had learnt the use of fire from him, but now the truth must be told, they learned it reluctantly, in fear, they did not take his guilt upon them. He would have to pay the penalty in person for his audacity in stealing fire from Gunung Api, he was too dangerous a man to have walking about; the old experienced ones, who once more raised their heads among the herd, could bear witness that it was a threat to the whole Forest Folk to have so erect an individual in their midst, he might bring the lightning down on them, all mankind was exposed to the envy and vengeance of the Powers. The proof of it lay in Gunung Api's actual outbreak of wrath, it was best to make the blasphemer cold as quickly as they could do it.

And then those one or two inventions of his which he

had presented to men, perfectly obvious things which anybody could invent after him, he had got pretty fat on those, but now he should smart for it!

Nevertheless it was insisted that it was not the Forest Folk themselves who condemned him; to be on the safe side, it was not they. The fire should judge him! If he was really a god, as some believed, then no doubt he would not catch when the fire reached him; fire must be able to withstand fire, and in that case there was plenty of flat ground to fall down on and worship him; as a god he would certainly show himself great enough to bear with the doubts of miserable men; but if he was a creature like the rest of us, then he would assuredly burn.

Ah, no ground is so safe to stand on, even when the earth quakes, as doubt; the Fiery One burned when he was put to the proof. Oh yes, the Elders blinked their eyes in wisdom as his hair and beard went off pretty quickly; he was inflammable as a pig, a man like you or me, what did I tell you? Genuine were his wailings when the fire took hold of hands and feet, he howled just like a man. No need to prolong the ordeal, he had not stood it; they let him taste the axe, his own invention, dipped the flint spear into him, another of his gifts to men, returned with thanks; and then they let the handmaids take him off the fire and open him, for they were skilled at it, and wasn't it intended to try him?

The earth still trembled a little, landslides tore down Gunung Api, and the lightning danced up in the gloom; it was midnight in the middle of the day, a horrid darkness with a sacrificial pyre like a pool of blood lying at the bottom, and in this underworld the trial was consummated; they tasted Fyr and found him fine, of a rich and delicate flavour, tender, light and volatile to the tongue, not unlike pig, but of a more soulful sweetness. This was the foretaste of a roast which later on would array men in hordes against each other and lead to their being mutually swal-

lowed in hosts; half as many after a battle as before it and only the gnawed bones and ashes to show where it had been fought; for the Forest Folk had acquired a taste for meat and seized with bared teeth whatever was not strong enought to seize *them*.

Fyr was good, they hiccuped, turning to each other with bloodshot eyes—to think, messmate, that you and I could take that man for a god!

## XI

### THE FAME OF FYR

BUT they had a multitude of things to think about after Fyr's death; after all, the doubt about his godhead had been shaky ground to stand upon; best and safest if a man doubted of doubt itself!

Sundry prodigies after the sacrifice of Fyr were difficult of impartial interpretation. Gunung Api had immediately settled down, no more quakings or flourishing of lightning, no forest fire; on the contrary, the mountain had become markedly quiet, and of course this might be understood as showing its satisfaction with the punishment of the malefactor; but at the same time there were indications that Gunung Api had received a mortal wound; he stopped smoking, a deathlike stillness reigned upon his surface—surely it could not be an incarnate god, Gunung Api in human form after all, that they had put to death?

Many fateful signs pointed to this: shortly after the disastrous day they found one morning all the palms withered; a rime had fallen which boded the passing of the evergreen forests. A shudder ran through all nature, and something strange was seen: the sky began to fall down in cold white shreds. What now? what had they done, did the universe stand fast no longer, was it true then that in their blindness they had gone and slain him who held up heaven and earth?

The sky did not fall in altogether that time, it only lost a layer; that was bad enough, the whole vault of heaven had evidently suffered no little damage; too late the Forest

Folk perceived that they had brought about their own ruin.

Many and grievous were the ideas they formed of their own weakness and of the possibility of the world's being saved in spite of it—if only they had had Fyr's head to see through it all and explain what was error and what truth!

But now their souls were black as the coals after the fire is gone, with spectral lights before their eyes but with no power to penetrate the darkness. Soon every feature of the departed Fiery One was recalled; himself they could not bring back. They had the fire, but not him.

His fame and the images that were used to describe his qualities passed into the language. Fiery was Fyr, a light among men, clear, bright, a brilliant brain; a gleam fell from him, he shone, the eternal fire was in his heart; he was the founder of all enlightenment, he flashed, sparkled with wit, he scintillated, his being was all aglow; and he was fervent, a torch in the night, he dazzled, there was warmth in him, he was ardent, his soul was aflame, he burned, he blazed, he kindled, flared up, shot out beams, in short every image taken from the genial element which he had controlled and made himself one with was applied to him. Never could it be forgotten that he had given fire to men. A pity that he of all men should have perished by fire!

But now it was done. Such things happen. No single person could be blamed for it; the whole Forest Folk had agreed to hand him over to the fire, and it had dealt roughly with him. The majority and the great Destroyer had spoken, who would raise his feeble individual voice against it?

What had happened later was scarcely fitted to be shouted abroad. Two points of view asserted themselves in the judgment of posterity regarding Fyr's end: one, that there was not a word of truth in that story of the sacrifice; it sounded sufficiently preposterous and ought to be received

with caution. The night was dark; who had seen it? There was an earthquake and everything had been shaken up; might it not easily happen that the story of Fyr's death and some casual slaughter or other in the neighbourhood had been shaken together?

One ought not to believe the worst of humanity; in reality no doubt Fyr had perished in a natural manner, and the vultures had taken him, as they took all the dead; this explanation actually became the current one and passed into tradition as the more seemly; when all was said and done, it was Gunung Api who had insisted on the punishment.

The other version was never put into words, it was an entirely tacit view which was shared by all but did not call for mention: there were a number of the Forest Folk, a perfectly definite number, who knew the facts, for they had all taken part in the so-called sacrifice, never fully cleared up or proved; and even if they said nothing, they shared the secret knowledge of one thing of no slight subsequent importance—every one of them had a part of the god inside him. Special honour was shown them; the hairs on one's back were apt to stand on end when one saw them, but they were entitled to their honour, one fell down before them. They and their descendants occupied a special position in the tribes; they were regarded with a feeling of holiness as a sort of burial place; somewhere in their direction Fyr was known to have gone.

Apart from this Fyr's power and the mystery of the fire passed to his sons, of whom he had many, all of them active, swaggering fellows who knew very well how to turn their inheritance to account.

In the general opinion Fyr gradually took the place of Gunung Api; it was an easier matter to imagine the god as a man than as a mountain. In sacrificing the thought was more of Fyr than of fire; the latter was worshipped in his person, it was from him that suppliants looked for an

answer to their prayers, since he understood men better than the inhuman fire. Thus worship, which hitherto had been somewhat obscure to the Forest Folk, acquired a meaning.

Of Fyr as a man it was said that he had made no resistance at all when condemned to the ordeal by fire; he had gone voluntarily to the pyre. When he had complained it was not of his treatment, so it was averred, but seemingly for other, personal reasons.

As to his treatment, what could be said about it? they were many against one, they had shouted in chorus, and the chorus is right. The caresses of the fire were not kind; yet Fyr suffered torment for other reasons than just because he was to burn and die. Thoughts that came up in him smarted more bitterly, mental images which intruded themselves all too vividly when he was faced by death and had to call all his days to account in a moment.

Then he saw how poor he was become, how short was the reach of man's arm and how far off the sky. Yet he had thought of one day walking on the field of the stars, seeing the moon from the back and touching the sun with his finger. But he had not even reached the top of Gunung Api. Time enough for that, he had thought—ay, that was it. Meanwhile he had prospered only too well on earth. Everything had succeeded with him; he had made himself master of his world, fire had been obedient to him, but one thing he had not been able to bind—pitiless time. He had fashioned a measure for it, set up numbers in the world to hold it fast, but was it not gone?

Where was past time? It was present behind his brow, but itself was no more. Where was his youth? Where was young Fyr, crowing at dawn on the mountain? Where was the Poppy, once his friend? Where was she and the brief flame of their time together? Ah, it had been himself that time, and seemingly it was himself now. Well

that they gave him to the fire! A punishment? Oh, quickly, quickly, throw on more wood, you dogs!

In tears Fyr had gone to his death. But when he cried, in human agony, as the years and the fire seized him, a hoarse croaking was heard and a human shadow, an old bent woman, came crawling to the pyre. It was Fyr's aged lame mother, long forgotten by all; far away, from her lair in the ground, she heard her boy crying and crept into the daylight once more, hobbled along with her lame foot and humped herself on to the pyre, lay down and gave a happy sigh; happy was she to share death with the bold lad who once, so long ago and yet how lately, ran from her arms with waving hair and vanished in the waves of the world.

If then she could not pass through fire for him, she could do it now. Her name was Woe.

It was afterwards said among the descendants of the Forest Folk that the sun was none other than Fyr; dazzling and generous he moved each day upon the heavens, sowing his light over all the world.

But the moon is his mother Woe; she goes after him and follows all his doings with pallid face; now whole, now half, she gives away pieces of her heart for him. When the nights are dark she has given all away and succumbed to grief, but when, whole once more, she gleams in the sky, it is well with him.

All women invoke Woe; variable as her heart is their nature, they go to pieces through giving; but every month their being is made whole again.

## XII

### THE MOUNTAIN SLUMBERS

GUNUNG API'S last eruption was more like a spasm, without very serious results, as when a giant stretches in his sleep; and afterwards he became strangely quiet, seemed to have left off smoking, and never betrayed by a tremor that there was a movement of life in his interior. Nor was he so continually hidden in cloud, he often stood exposed in all his long black nakedness, and there was such a frosty clearness around his summit. Did he breathe no more, was he really lifeless?

No one who asked the question would live to know the answer, nor would his descendants for many generations. Gunung Api had entered upon a long sleep, had choked up his funnel with ashes, and far below him in the earth's furnaces the fire had coiled about itself, resigned to æons of imprisonment. It seemed, then, that it could not maintain its rule of terror upon earth.

Something different, however, something not of the nature of fire, is in the air upon earth. Let it come, as it is fated.

For now man runs with fire like a tamed leopard by his side; he is grown bold and a great eater, feeding even upon his brother's gall; the little fellow is getting quite hot about the headpiece: might it not be a good thing to cool him down a little?

And one morning down in the valleys the hunters and the hunted see a white hood, with a strange, hard gleam, like a lifeless eye, lying upon the head of Gunung Api; the first forerunner of the Ice Sheet.

# BOOK TWO
# ICE

# I

## CARL

A FIRE was burning in the primeval forest, the only one for miles around. It had been kindled in an open space under an overhanging slant of rock which faced away from the wind. Overhead the blast surged heavily through the forest; the night was dark, without moon or stars. It was raining. But the fire burned steadily under the rock, with a clear flame rising from a heap of brushwood; its glare formed a sort of cavern in the deep night.

Around the fire lay a group of men asleep, all near enough for the light to reach them. They were naked. There were only men. Each slept with a club in his hand or lying beside him so that he could reach it in his sleep. Their baskets of reeds, containing a varied provision of fruit and roots, lay in the grass about the fire, whose circle of light in the wild bush enclosed the group. A few paces beyond the shelter of the rock, where the rain fell and the darkness crept near, the remains of a zebra-like animal, an offering to the fire, could be dimly seen.

Only one of the party was awake. He sat by the fire and moved but little, but his eyes were never still; he was a tall, large-limbed lad of uncommonly powerful build, though he had not yet reached maturity. By his side he had a huge pile of branches and brushwood, from which he now and then replenished the fire. If it did but sink just so much that the outermost of the party were left beyond the wall of light, they began at once to toss in their

sleep; but that did not happen often, the boy had a skill of his own in feeding the fire steadily, he knew how much wood he had stacked up and how long the night was. He tended the fire without having to give it a thought and for the rest sat calmly and alone with all his senses directed outward to the wild darkness of the forest.

In his left hand he held a wedge of flint, as yet only roughly shaped, and when the fire was burning evenly and nothing else caught his attention, he applied a short piece of stag's antler to one part or other of the flint and after long and careful calculation pressed off a flake, which sprang into the fire. Then he examined the effect, weighed in his hand the block of flint, which was to be an axe whose like had never been seen before, and let his eyes dwell intently on its various sides before he applied the antler again and considered the lie of the next splinter which concealed the form he had in his eye. A creative light came over his rude features, a visionary gleam, as he sat coaxing a tool out of the stone; he sparkled with sagacity so long as he was trying and guessing his way, but when he pressed a flake off he put a force into it that would have driven the antler through a man's head, and bent his back as though to raise a mountain, above all when he had to take off a tiny flake and no more. It was to be a weapon like none other. Beside his knee lay the axe he chopped wood with for the fire; it was just an ordinary bit of flint without form or edge, but it was sacred, an heirloom in the clan, and it had decided his fate.

His name was Carl. He was born to tend the fire, belonged to the much respected and dreaded family whose members all had the prerogative of caring for the fire and receiving its offerings.

This privilege was so ancient that no one rightly remembered its origin. Doubtful legends were told of a man of the tribe who once in altruistic madness had stormed the burning mountain, where dwelt the Fire Spirit, the crack-

ling Consumer, and had come down again unharmed with a flame on the end of a branch. Naturally the tribe had flung the possessed one on the midden to the vultures, but they kept the fire and were glad of it. The poor wretch who had stolen fire obtained redress in a goodly posthumous fame, since the vultures were protected and made objects of worship, being presumed to possess the soul of him they had devoured. But after that time the fire and its offerings became hereditary in this man's family, and among his descendants was Carl. He enjoyed the esteem due to his birth, but for several reasons was already not a little feared.

Carl was a warrior. As a rule the Fire clan was not distinguished by manliness; their work was light and they lived too well on the game that was sacrificed to the fire. These trusted men of the tribe were usually feeble stay-at-homes who made up for their lack of strength by magic or other cowardly tricks. In most of the other tribes they knew of, but never came in touch with, the fire was tended by the women, and the work was not looked upon as befitting men. But of course the reason for this was to be sought in the ignorance and general low standing of the foreign tribes in question. Only it was a pity that the sulky Carl seemed to share the views of these distant savages, often spoke of his calling with contempt and replied by a box on the ears when taken to task for it. Carl did not take after his immediate predecessors, he early distinguished himself by a taste for solitude. He tended his fire better than it had been done before, but without any graces, did not fall on his stomach before the burning spirit but methodically gave it something to bite on; he went about the felling of trees with a zest worthy of manslaughter, and men of repute in his tribe didn't like to see it. He had powerful hands and made the most excellent weapons, but then that was hardly the thing for him to do.

As a mere boy Carl had shown a taste for hunting, very

improper in one destined for the priesthood, and even then he wouldn't go with the other youngest hunters of the tribe but unsociably and alone; he was still only a youngster himself when he brought down a foal of the three-toed horse with his bit of an ash branch hardened in the fire and dragged the carcass home; then it was a cave-bear cub, and then a plump mallow-coloured rhinocerous calf, still hornless. These things were winked at. But the time arrived when the sacred wood-chopping axe was solemnly entrusted to him and he was consecrated to a long undashing life as tender of the fire. His careless childhood had come to an end. Carl might still try a little run in the forest when some other of the family had his watch by the fire, but his worldliness was more and more frowned upon and means were found to make things so unpleasant for him after each of these jaunts that he preferred to drop them. But the love of sport was in his blood and sought its outlet in a deeply stirred inner life, he dreamed of great things. His lack of adventure and bondage to the fire made him ungentle of spirit but not poor or malicious, for that he was too healthy. In spite of all his forced idleness he grew strong as a bison and was silent and frugal withal. Young as he was, he had already set up no little tension between himself and the whole tribe. If the elders cut him off from deeds of valour he was certainly going to make it lively for them in return, and Carl made up fires which singed the balls of the sleepers' feet and looked like eating up the whole camp, or else he gave them smoke that nearly burst their throats with coughing. The tribe had to put up with his rude jokes, but he was not loved. They lived in an idyl and did not want to be reminded that there *were* other things. Notwithstanding this, Carl's lot might easily have turned out not very unlike that of his fellows, though he was born defiant: time might have remoulded his forces into spite, so that in him his tribe would have found the scourge it deserved, and the fat of the great offer-

ings would also have settled about his heart, helped by the years.

But the idyl was no longer so secure. The primitive folk had long been aware that the world was changing around them. They no longer had a fixed place of abode, they had entered upon a life of migration. The forest gave them no lodging as of old, could not afford shelter, it was beginning to be in a bad way itself. Something was in the air which year by year grew more dangerous and was now beginning to threaten every living thing. It had grown colder and colder. The rain would never leave off. *Cold* —what was it? *Who* was it? Where did it come from?

Carl was thinking about this as he sat alone by the fire and the others slept, and the boy took it very seriously. He saw that the existence of the tribe was threatened. Within his own memory his people were still living on the northern side of the mountains; he remembered the year when it got too cold and they crossed the pass down to the south side. Since then they had moved each year, and now they were living several days' journey to the south of this place, where Carl sat by the fire troubled in spirit over the constant retreat.

The tribe with its women and children were living in a valley many leagues away, where palms and breadfruit-trees still flourished, and this group round the fire was only an expedition sent up to the deserted haunts to bring back whatever fruit and game might be left in the old groves.

Here in the rock-shelter the tribe had stayed a year, till it was no longer fit to live in; Carl could still see traces of the huts of boughs which rain and slush had scattered over the cold ground. Here in the sunny glade before the rock he had seen the little downy children of the tribe playing with feathers, blowing them up into the sunshine and making them fly like birds among the flowery bushes. Now it was all desolate, the bare rock cropped out of the ground, which was washed barren by the everlasting rain.

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But the tribe took their retirement with composure, if they remarked it at all—why yes, they'd have to go farther south if there wasn't a living to be got in the northern forest. If the trees died and food ran out where they had settled, they could just break camp and find a better place, wasn't there room enough to the south? The only one who didn't relish this was Carl. He followed his tribe, gave ground with it from one valley to another, but it was against his humour. There was coercion in it, and that hardened his heart. How long was the retreat to be kept up, was it to go on for ever? Must they not one day turn and face the cold, set their teeth against this silent power that had begun to make everything wither and stiffen, the cold that never showed itself but kept what it had taken? Was it any use keeping up this life of eternal carelessness, when every year they had to transport their security so many weary miles farther south across the mountains? Was it not better to haft the battle-axe at once and fight for their lives in the open?

Carl felt something of this sort every night during the joyless expedition up into the cold among the tribe's former settlements, while he sat watching by the fire. It prompted him to action, murderous action, though this was not clear to him. He was a primitive man, with mighty impulses but no reflective mind. He simply did not turn aside for any one or anything, and this savage strength that blindly revolted against any kind of compulsion was the cause which sundered his fate from that of his tribe.

The Ice was coming on; before it went incessant rain and cold nights which drove men out of their shiftless jungle existence. They would not and could not learn what was coming, and so they had to go. They froze, poor innocents, tried to make themselves cloaks of fig-leaves against the raw weather; they sang sweet songs of lamentation, but the north wind with its cold scourge had come between them and their leafy booths under the plantains.

Their home was no more, they were forced to migrate.

It cost them a sigh every time they had to give up the ancestral gardens, no longer hospitable; but they recovered themselves in the sunshine farther south, they sang with joy when they had planted the wanderer's staff in a new place and saw it bud; here it was good, here they would stay; next year the cold overtook them there and they had to go on. Yet they were too forgetful to be aware of this gradual retirement, their thoughts were only of the present; but the fall in their existence set its mark upon them without their knowing it and made them first poor and then small.

Carl could not yield. His heart fed upon defiance, he grew in adversity. And when the primitive people were brought to the crossways between the cold and the forest, he was the one who chose the impossible. He became the first man.

## II

### THE LOST COUNTRY

THE night was long, and Carl sat pondering by the fire.

Watching thus he was the eyes and ears of his comrades and the soul of the dark boundless forest. He focussed in himself every movement for miles around, the slightest sound reached him, every hair of his body was on the watch, not a breath of air escaped him, not a scent passed by without giving him a message. His nose was so keen that he could walk over the turf and track the mole underground to the place where it cast. His eyes flashed and flashed with a never-resting intentness, and when he slept there was a sallow spot on each eyelid which gave his face a dangerous brooding look and scared away every living thing that tried to approach him. He was silent, for his head was continually breeding. No one knew what was stirring in his soul, nor did he know it himself until he flashed into action.

Such was he, and such the fire showed him to be as he sat beside it, a hairy young forest man with rude massive brows, wide-open nostrils and savage protruding jaws. The hollow of his chest was full of hair, his long arms were shaggy, except where the great muscles showed up bare. When his hands were not at work on the axe he often sat with it between his toes, and he used his feet just as much as his hands for pushing sticks into the fire. In all these ways he was no different from the other forest men, his comrades lying asleep round the fire, only they perhaps were generally slighter, with a handsomer coat

of hair and of more delicate build. Their savage exterior brought them nearer to the beasts of the jungle, whose grace they still shared. They slept with club in one hand and a half-eaten fruit in the other. Carl alone, who had begun to think for them, had grown hard and implacable of feature.

To Carl's violent appearance answered an inner wrath and energy, grief at the way things were going, bed upon bed of stored experience, which made him more and more highly charged and was bound to lead to a bursting of his very existence. He had forgotten nothing but added one thing to another, and as he sat feeding his heart with dark forebodings of the destruction of the world, his raging blood surged to revolt, to resisting action.

For he saw that the primeval forest was doomed. It was all over with eternal summer. The warm groves were vanishing, and rain and storm had invaded the mountains of Scandinavia. Farther south the forest still held its own with palms and breadfruit-trees, and the vines lay ripening on rocky slopes shelving to blue straits; but for how long? When they came home to the camp where the tribe was living, these young men lying by the fire with cold shudders on one side and hot on the other would take the well-sunned bunches of grapes, heavy as udders, in their hands and laugh as they sucked again the milk of blissfulness. But the year after Carl would have the dead vines to feed his fire on the same spot and the camp would be shifted, and how long was that to go on? The forest was doomed, a Power from the North was marching on irresistibly and inevitably and laying it waste.

Carl looked about him at the trees in the rain outside. Even now in the night-time he could see the desolation, and what he could not see he knew from the daylight. All the palms were dead and leafless and stood with their bare and blackened stems thrusting up into the air like a great gnawed bone. The tree-ferns hung black and blighted, their tops

turned to a rotting mass of mud; mimosas and acacias had curled up years before and were washed unrecognizable; all the evergreen trees had perished right down to the roots and were pointing this way and that with pale barked branches. Mighty cedars and gumtrees lay overthrown with giant twisting roots, bared by the rain, sticking up among the ruins of other lifeless trees. All flowers and bushes were killed by the cold rain. The ground was a morass of decaying wood and great naked stones. Only a few of the conifers seemed to be trying to resist, but they stooped and grew sideways, and the resin clotted on their bark and turned white. Ugh! said the voice of the forest.

Ugh! A cold sigh runs through the ribless treetops, and above them comes a tearing sound in the darkness, the rapid gasping wingbeats of flocks of birds who have got too cold feet in the waters north of the pass and are now up and making a streak for the south. They talk to each other through the dark at their giddy height, in broken accents of exile, geese, storks and flamingoes; they are not happy, Carl hears their vanishing farewell and shares their homelessness.

Far in the depths of the forest there is a rumbling from the thousand-year-old path the game has made across the pass; Carl knows it and follows with his omniscient senses the sounds of marching and creeping, heavy footfalls and light trotting all night long over the pass, where the blast urges the pace. It is the beasts migrating nightly in great herds from the forests north of the mountains down to more southerly valleys. Carl recognizes them by their warm smell and knows all about them to-night, though he cannot see them. He hears them and knows exactly where they are.

And as the night wears on long lines of pachyderms defile across the pass, primordial elephants, megatheriums and rhinoceroses, flapping their great clayey ears in the wind, soaked with the rain and fasting. Now and then one of

the mighty beasts rumbles like an earthquake in his empty guts, and the elephant curls his trunk and makes the deep forest resound to his sniffling cough. The great cave lion has caught cold and sneezes mournfully, then dries his face with his paw and goes on. The wart-hog is short of wind, snores dismally in his snout and makes question marks with his tail.

Not far behind comes a tripping of many light hoofs, the shy grass-eaters of the jungle, they too are migrating; and among them can be heard the stealthy tread of beasts of prey, who have also lost their continuing abode. Here gazelles fleeting and pale in colour as moonbeams trot beneath the foliage in company with lame, reeking hyenas; wild horses and okapi travel shoulder to shoulder with tiger and leopard, for to-night the beasts are migrating and have forgotten all bashfulness with one another. Behind them the north wind howls across the pass with his long cold lash. Troops disappear into the valley on the south and fresh herds come up over the pass from the north. The giraffe swings his long neck and sweeps withered leaves from the twigs with his crowned forehead while keeping pace with the others, dumb and with moist devotional eyes. Smaller game try to keep up in a busy trot, porcupines, tapirs, anteaters; everything that has legs is on the way south.

But up above the trail there is a procession of emigrants in the trees, the inconstant apes, their time in these regions is over. There seems to be an idea that they have got to do something, take thought for the morrow, what? No more wasteful throwing about of cocoanuts, they are done; no noisy parliament in the treetops as to which of them is to be thrown out; they are all thrown out, the jungle is in ruin. They are on the move, and they are not above emigrating, though of course it is an insult and they let people know it. They don't see why they should take hold of wet branches with their hands; many of them refuse

absolutely, but follow all the same when the others have gone on. Not one of the monkeys ever looks back. And there are but few of the migrating animals that do so.

One great beast of the elephant tribe turned and looked back towards his jungle home and then he could go no farther, he faced about and made his way back over the pass; that was the mammoth. A few other animals stayed behind, because somehow they wanted to, and it was no good time that awaited them.

Over the whole forest there was a strange rustling of beasts on the move and in trouble. The hippopotamus landed dripping with mud from its lake which had got too cool; Carl could hear it blow the wind out of its huge belly and nose its way through the withered undergrowth in search of warmer waters. With a queer feeling of pain Carl listened to the behaviour of the few beasts which were going to stay behind in the forest; they could not go, but there was a fear upon them, they complained in a changed voice, their tone seemed to have lost its boldness. The reindeer stands perfectly still under a tree and can't understand the forest, can't understand itself; once in a while it flaps its ears, shakes its head, shifts its feet, wincing in its creaking pasterns. The musk-ox has quietly gone mad like the great sheep he is, and is now on his way due north, clean against the stream of all the rest; that's his business. The bear is sulky about it but hasn't thought of leaving; he lies down somewhere and scrapes up dead leaves for a bed, he has got a cold and wants to turn in. He is not in a good temper, sniffs indignantly at this weather coming on just when he is busy with his bees. Now he'll have a snooze till the sun wakes him, and if anybody treads on him, he'd better look out! Bruin doesn't know that it is a long sleep he is going to. The badger and the hedgehog follow his example and go to earth to wait for better times.

But not all the animals have such practical ideas. The forest is alive above and below with creatures that are

neither hunting nor seeking shelter, but only roaming restlessly about, on their legs the whole night because the cold gives them no peace. Carl can hear how they steal up and down, deer, buffaloes and wild goats; they stand still and sniff the wind, trying to understand it all, they shake their ears to see if listening will tell them where the baneful air comes from; and then they turn tail and bow themselves, steal up and down again. None of them comes near the fire; *that* smell they know; they know too that the Bright One it comes from bites and devours worse than anything else in the forest.

Only once, about midnight, Carl noticed two glistening green lights at the break of the jungle not far away and saw the gleam of a pair of long bared fangs; it was the sabre cat creeping up, the terrible beast with swords in its mouth. Why was it unafraid of the fire to-night, why did it venture so near? A shudder passed over the sleepers, who could feel its presence in their sleep, several of them began to utter stifled moans, and all Carl's veins were painfully aflame at the approach of this frightful enemy. But the sabre cat went away again, blinked its hungry eyes in abandonment and went. The rain poured down its gaunt striped sides; it was so cold and its tiger's heart was surely touched by a cruelty more deadly than its own. Carl heard it turn away and roam about in the jungle, without aim, without blood-thirst, without resolve, and he knew that it was doomed, that it was shut out.

But at this Carl was grieved and it terrified him. Had it come to this, that the sabre cat, the great friendless one who hitherto had withstood the hatred and curses of *all* creatures, should seek the fire, not with the object of taking off a man for supper, but to manifest its dejection and go away without wanting to eat? What was going to happen to the world, what had been secretly decreed, who was the Insatiable One from the North who was laying waste the forest and driving out the beasts, what pitiless Power

could it be? Was it a man, or was it a Being whom none could see, a mighty malignant Spirit? Could he not be killed, could he not be forced to show himself and accept battle? Might not an axe in the right spot put an end to his doings?

The night is long. Far away the wolves howl lugubriously in chorus, and in a hollow tree sits the owl chanting a doleful warning. One bird wails and another scoffs, the crocodile blubbers with his mouth full of food, and the hyena doubles himself up with mischievous laughter, his hindquarters shrivel up once for all with dirty amusement; but it does not occur to a single one of the beasts to fill the forest with a howl of challenge to the monstrous marauder who is ruining them all; no cry for vengeance, no conscious plan for murder. Every creature hums and haws composedly, each for himself in his isolation; beasts of prey and wild sheep stray about promiscuously in their abandonment, all defenceless against the cold.

Carl swore to avenge them.

This was in the nights of transition, when the tropical climate of Northern Europe was passing into the Ice Age. But the memory of the warmth lived on in the mind of man, after he had spread over the earth from his northern home—the imperishable legend of the Garden of Paradise. in the North the childhood of mankind was passed, and the memory of this, so profound and rich in pain, is the Lost Country.

Even the beasts, who dream in their own blind, submissive way, still preserve in the cheerful frankness with which they eat each other up the memory of that vanished state of innocence, before cold came into the world.

## III

### WINTER

AND the night wore on. After midnight the full moon showed for a brief while in the sky, lending a feeble light to the immense clouds that beleaguered creation, and when the clouds had swallowed it again, total darkness fell, as in a cave under ground, the rain increased and fell in streams, drowning the ruins of the jungle. A foaming waterfall dashed aslant from heaven to earth, solid lakes of rain came down and tore up the earth to its foundations.

Carl heard how the masses of water collected up on the mountain and plunged down among the rocks and trees, with deep bell-like abysmal tones as they rushed in and out of caves, with muffled crashes of landslides and uprooted trees. No sound could now be heard from the distressed and fugitive animals.

It was as though the heavens—which as far back as men and beasts could recall had lashed the earth with barren, never-ceasing torrents, ever denser until they seemed the prelude to eternal darkness, and ever colder—were now gathering themselves for a final annihilating deluge which would drown the whole earth. The stems of the dead palms rang one against another and collapsed in heaps under the swirling pressure of water, whole islands of fallen trees with their roots washed clean of earth came swimming down from the hills; the sky roared with rain.

And how cold the rain was! An icy breath filled the air under the sheltering rock, which the fire, lighting up the steadily streaming wall of rain, could not banish. The

sleepers huddled up and shivered, frightened at their dreams; some of them awoke and muttered to themselves as they looked out at the black floods of rain which surrounded them as in a pit; but then they were powerless and unable to form any train of ideas for long; they lay down again with their arms over their heads, heaved a deep sigh and slept on, half dead with cold. It was a long night.

Carl made up the fire and gazed out at the rain with a more and more hostile glare under his bony brows. His heart was hardening, he showed his teeth at the weather. As there was nothing else to be done, he pulled himself together and settled down to finish his new flint axe.

An hour before dawn the rain abated and finally stopped altogether. Every sound was so distinct in the hushed air that the water could be heard miles away rushing down the hills and bubbling as it settled in the swamps of the devastated forests. All the beasts were silent. The man under the rock shelter sank into a torpor, sleeping heavily without the slightest sign of dreams. A faint light appeared among the drenched tree-trunks, leaning or fallen, the sky came forth out of the night in a pale empty hue. There was a dead calm and it was very cold; the air was saturated with a fresh smell from all the earth laid bare by the rain. It was as though the whole world lay naked and freezing and awaited its doom.

And a little before sunrise the dawn was blotted out by a new ghost of blue-black swelling clouds, which grew out of one another as they flew and spread over the whole sky. A sickly darkness fell and for a short time Nature was perfectly dumb, while Carl gazed in stifling expectation at these new clouds, which were blacker and more pregnant than any he had seen before.

Suddenly the lightning flashed from this gulf of gloom, flashed with a cold blue all-embracing flame, in the light of which the clouds showed for an instant white as fire right up to the top of the sky, vast worlds of peaks and white

chasms overhead; the thunderclap followed immediately on the lightning in a short tearing crash, and at the same moment the clouds opened and dashed to earth in a headlong fall. But it was no longer water that came down, it was white stinging things, hail, grains of ice beating upon the ground; the shower swept across the soaking earth in a dense, shrieking volley.

The thunder startled every living thing. From the forest came a stifled wailing of many voices. Beasts that had long been fighting with the water in the flooded valleys, deer and tigers mixed together, raised themselves in their last convulsive struggles above the waves and caught the blue flash in their dying eyes before they sank never to rise again. Far, far away in a ravine the unicorn roused distant echoes with an anguished signal of distress, and soon after it trumpeted farther off but more wildly; it had gone mad and was now raging senselessly through distant forests.

All the sleepers under the rock shelter started up and threw themselves on their stomachs as one man before the thunder, imploring, twitching their lips, snivelling and slapping the earth, begging their lives so sorely. But when they had wept and lain in the dust a little while and no more claps followed, they calmed down and crept nearer the fire, stared into the flames with their poor gentle eyes, still wet with tears, and were thrilled through with thanks to the gracious fire which vouchsafed them its warmth; they stretched out their hands over it and involuntarily moved their lips as though eating, so pleasant was it; they nodded again and again in profound gratitude—ah, Fire was their lord and only friend. Then they scratched themselves busily, took another bite at the apple in their hand, wrangled a little—in short, they had once more happily escaped destruction. As for the white stuff that had fallen outside, they could only spare it a casual glance; it looked nasty, of course, but it was cozy here by the fire and they hadn't to go out in it just yet. Soon the warmth overcame

them; it was not yet day; they yawned and shook themselves, one after another fell back and shuffled himself into the place his body had kept dry, and soon the whole party was asleep again.

After the hail shower came the sun. The white grains quickly vanished in a vapour which rose from the ground and drifted off under the sun's rays. For a short time there was clear sunshine over the pitiable floods of the forests, as though the sun wanted to survey the work of destruction; but soon an uncanny mist crept over the ground, and in the morning stillness that followed a strange awestruck crackling and starting began in the forest.

Something was happening, something quiet and stealthy that had never been known before. Far and wide all nature lay in a soundless pause, in which the earth yielded itself to a new and painful wonder. Cold could be felt as the only thing that had power in the world.

And now Carl could not keep quiet any longer. The resentment that had been gathering within him during the months of pitiless rain, ran over; he felt that what was now taking place in the forest was a final deadly coward's blow, and the time had come when this Destroyer must be stopped. Now he would go out and find him, whoever he was that was driving men from their dwelling places, drowning the beasts and laying waste the earth, now he should be forced to show himself!

Carl took the old rough piece of flint out of its haft and lashed the new sharp blade he had shaped in its place. After that he made up his fire, covered it well and laid on wood so that it might burn a long time, and then he was ready. He looked round with a kindly eye at his brothers, who lay twitching in their sleep, with their limbs drawn in close to the body and even their toes curled up from the cold; he felt how he was bound up with them, how it was just their irresponsibility, their airy, forgetful nature, that called upon him to go out as their common protector.

They should not freeze, they should not perish. Carl made a sign on his breast with the axe as though devoting himself to his destiny, then stole out of the shelter and passed alone into the open.

It was bitingly cold in the forest. A sharp invisible poison seemed to hang in the still morning air. Carl lost his head and started to run, bounded on blindly for a long time through the impassable forest, climbing over or under the uprooted trees. The ground was covered by ice-cold mud which scorched his legs when he sank in it, and on the surface lay cold cutting things, long clear blades and splinters of ice; they made him jump into the air like snake-bites and for a while he was quite beside himself rushing along with the axe before him without any notion of where he was going. Unconsciously he made his way upward, above the lower slopes, so as to reach a safe place where less water was lying and there was a freer view.

Up on the mountain he regained his balance and went forward more calmly, still rather scared and much out of breath, but looking about him again. High up on a terrace of the mountain the forest opened out into bare ground, and with the bushman's distrust of glades he bent double long before reaching it and finally approached it on all fours. It seemed a place where he might expect to meet the enemy, the stealthy spirit of Cold.

Cautiously with both hands he parted a bush at the edge of the open and scanned the plain. No living thing was to be seen. The turf, which the rain had furrowed and broken up, was frozen stiff; the fallen trees over on the other side swam in a white mist. Dead silence. The bush which hid him was feathery and all its stripped twigs were covered with transparent flakes; some of them fell on his hands with a cold bite, till they dissolved into drops on his skin; he tasted them and found they were fresh water with a flavour of the air they came from, hardened rain that yielded to

warmth and became water again. The uprooted trees round about were white and feathery at the top with the same cold stuff, like a new kind of strange blossoming; now and then a shudder went through the still forest and the rime dust scattered down with a thousand tiny clinking sounds, the thin and painful song of the forest, as though the whole earth winced in its sleep.

Carl sniffed with wide nostrils and drank in the pungent frosty air which sharpened his sense of smell to the utmost, but brought him no message either of plants or beasts. Instead he had a keener feeling of himself, of his blood and his breath, the singing purity and sweetness of the air made him more alive, he snorted like a horse and shook himself violently, so that the rime shivered down from the bush over his body. He looked about him with a challenge—where was the destructive Being he was after, how should he get at him? Hush!

There was a quacking high up above the forest; Carl bobbed down. A moment later he saw two wild duck dash down in full flight towards a little lake which lay close by him on the plain, a pond formed by the floods of the night, which lay perfectly smooth beneath the mist with rocky borders. The ducks were soaring without flapping their wings, they had almost reached the surface of the pond and had their feet stretched out to catch it—and as they touched Carl saw them slide a long way over the surface, first on their outstretched feet and then, losing their balance, on their tails; they couldn't get down into the wet. At last they got on their feet and rolled along over the pond, slipped and came down clumsily, got up again and stood like a pair of foolish birds, turned and looked about them in a puzzled way with their little eyes set high up in their heads. The pond was frozen, covered with a surface of ice! Carl sniffed knowingly. So that's it. He went up to it and stood looking down through the clear ice at the water, which lay still as death over the gravel and stones at the

bottom; he tried the ice with his bare feet and heard it give with a sharp crack; it would not bear him yet. He went on through the rime-covered grass which made his feet smart, straight across the plain so as to come higher up the mountain. Where there was no greensward the naked earth lay hard as rock and had found a voice; it resounded with an earthy ring under his feet. This was the first winter.

Carl climbed out of the fog higher up the mountain where the sun had power and the ground was not frozen. The forest came to an end and gave place to bushes and heather; finally nothing but moss grew on the wild rocks. At last Carl reached the highest summit and stood in the sun's warmth looking down into the valley, where the frost fog lay like a deep white lake. The sun, which was now high in the heaven, detached whole clouds from the mist and drove them up into the air until they shrank and faded away. Whirlwinds that had frolicked in the sunshine up under the blue sky struck down, tearing deep wells in the fog, and through them Carl could see down to the bottom of the valley, where the uprooted trees lay like sticks in a confused mass and whole herds of drowned animals floated like flies in the frozen surface of the swollen swamps.

## IV

## THE OUTCAST

CARL did not find his great enemy that day. He was not high enough up. When he had looked around him for a while from the top of the mountain he saw that all he had gained was a free view of yet higher mountains farther off.

Far away to the north they rose, one steep peak behind another, whole hosts of mountains sloping up from every quarter and standing together to support the roof of the world, and above them again came a region of dizzy white peaks reaching right into heaven, so that he could not see whether they were clouds or a new inconceivable world. Was that where the north wind and the frost came from? Ah, then the pursuit might be long, then it would be hard indeed to reach the Mighty One who sent down cold into the valleys. He dwelt high up, and might he not prove over powerful for a man?

Carl's resolution was shaken and he stood a long while lost in salutary meditations, not knowing how time passed. The noonday sun broke up the last shreds of mist in the valley and showed it in its whole extent. What a dizzy depth there was on every side. Carl caught sight of a dot up in the blue, immensely high up, a black speck hovering and descending in great spirals; it was a vulture. It rapidly grew bigger and when it came level with him over the precipice, it folded its wings and dropped like a stone in a straight dive through the air, grew smaller and smaller until at last it vanished again as a speck far below, amid

the glare of the sunshine in the wet valley. There was the murmur of a faint breeze where he stood, but not a sound came from below.

From the mountain top the devastation of the rains showed only as holes and channels in the carpet of the forest. It looked as if a finger had amused itself by writing in the soil below. The sun laughed upon the deluge, the clouds shone and went their way. Who was Carl? Did any of the mighty ones who had their being up here above the world even suspect that he existed; *was* there after all any one who was persecuting him and his tribe?

Clouds, wide as whole tracts of country, wandered over the sky from peak to peak, changing as they went, and far below on earth their shadows moved and changed with them. A single white cloud, no bigger than a hand in the sky, darkened the whole valley beneath. The earth sombred or smiled with the passage of the shining clouds through the world.

Did the clouds know of men? They went on dizzy paths above the mountains and sported with the sun, but men were too small for them. They shone in lofty ignorance, they knew not Carl with his avenging axe, Carl the Great, who had set out to exterminate the world.

Carl was put to shame by the smiling face of heaven, he crept under a rock like a worm and for a long time did not show himself.

Later, when he came out again much sobered, the sky had shut out the sun. The distant peaks could be seen no more. The clouds were grey and low, they clung to the tops of the nearest mountains and rolled down their sides. The valley below Carl lay buried in a murky gloom. He began to climb down and had not gone far when this darkness, which proved to be pouring rain, closed over him.

Before Carl reached the bottom of the valley again it was getting on towards evening. He became suddenly alarmed at the thought of his comrades and hurried on till

the cold rain steamed off his shoulderblades. On catching sight of the rock where he had left the others in the morning, he was greatly surprised to see no smoke and stopped still. A terrible thought struck him, he caught at his breath and set off in long leaps, came rushing in under the rock—they were gone! The fire was out!

Yes, it was bare and cold under the sheltering rock, his brothers had left the place. Carl saw at a glance that the fire was untouched as he had left it in the morning, but out. They must have slept a long time and the fire had gone out; the wood was damp and all of it had not caught as he had reckoned, and perhaps the wind had changed and blown the rain in under the rock. At any rate the fire was out. And then the poor creatures had waked in the morning and found the fire cold and seen that he was gone! Then they had broken camp and started on the homeward trail in the deepest despair, as he could understand. The fire had gone out. And here stood Carl absolutely alone! They were gone, all of them, and he was left behind alone in the wild flooded forest.

Quickly he bent down and found their tracks in the moist gravel, he knew every one of them and whimpered with his nose to the ground, weeping with grief at what had happened and terror at their forsaking him. The tracks were easy to follow and he started off after his comrades, breaking into a run as he went through the forest. And darkness fell. He turned his head from one side to the other, wept and showed his teeth, as he tore along, terror giving him wings. What if he did not overtake them! What if they were dead! He passed places where he could see they had been baffled and had stood in a body before finding a way round the floods; he came upon some of the miserable bundles of food they had thrown away so as to get on faster, and he stood still a moment and sobbed over their distress and over the calamity that had befallen them. But darkness and the fearful loneliness of the forest drove

him on. He saw by the fresh trail that they could not be far away now, and the cold sweat of his body changed to a prickling heat, he laughed and cried by turns as he ran.

And at last he came up with them in a cave, where they had halted and sat together in a bunch, wailing softly in the darkness. He heard them a long way off; their cries of distress had passed into a monotonous plaint, which they had repeated so many times that it sounded like a sort of weary and pitiful chant, the burden being that the fire had gone out and it was a long way home. Carl stood still and called to them, called from the bottom of his heart, sang to them that it was he. They fell silent. He approached them with the last of his wind, ready to drop with exertion, hiccuping with joy.

But when he had come near enough, they stood up and met him with a united shout of rage. They came outside the cave and received him in a body with angry abuse and threats. Through the dusk he saw them turn the whites of their eyes, he saw stones in their hairy hands, and they swung their clubs at him as at a dangerous wild beast. Thus had Carl seen the troop rise up and make a stand against a wolf or a tiger that came too near the camp; but then to be sure he had been in the troop himself and one of the first to shout and threaten; now he was outside.

It was nearly dark and the cold rain beat down upon the troop, who were getting more and more inflamed, and upon the one who stood outside in the deepest dejection.

Yes, but it's me! he called in a broken voice, bringing himself a little nearer and exposing his whole body so that they might know him. Just so, it was he—and the stones whistled about his ears. One big stone hit him full on the chest so that he felt it ring hollow right through to his back. Then he stopped calling and drew back. It didn't hurt so badly, he thought, for they were quite right about his letting the fire out, but *who* could it be that threw

such a big stone? He hesitated a minute, unwilling to understand that he had to take himself off. But that was what was meant. They picked up more stones and slung them after him, and as he did not give way, though it was hard to defend one's self in the dusk against so many missiles at once, the band began to move towards him, yelling with rage. One of the tallest of them was at their head and led the chorus in a curse on the traitor who had quenched the fire. *Traitor!* It was Gyuk, Carl's dear friend Gyuk.

What! thought Carl, stiffening all over, what was that Gyuk said? How was it possible that *he* could lead the band and be the first to curse him? Was that Gyuk he saw there with distorted features, his flesh rising with malignity; was that the gentle Gyuk who was pressing on him, closer and closer, foaming at the mouth, with shaking, upraised hands and with the others barking behind him in chorus?

Carl did not give ground, but his chest was beginning to tighten, he gave one or two violent snorts and lost command of himself. But even now he hoped for reconciliation. He wanted to explain, tried to say something, and when the others simply shouted him down he silently enquired of himself whether they might really be right. Was he a traitor? Had he not actually tried to save them in a broader sense than they were able to grasp? Could not even Gyuk imagine this?

A stone hit Carl, and now he got wild, the blood rushed into his eyes, he was shaking, opened his mouth and gave a low howl. He shifted to and fro with a strange buoyancy, lifting his feet high off the ground and shaking them, as though his whole body had lost its weight; he had become inarticulate like the herd that threatened him, like the beast that cursed and would not hear him. They had their limits, but he had none. . . .

And as Gyuk still came on, pouring out his senseless

curses, Carl stepped quickly up to him and split his head to the teeth with the flint axe. He puffed with relief and stepped aside from the stream of blood which boiled out of his friend's mouth. None of them could believe it. Carl had done the impossible thing.

Gyuk died instantly. And while the others stood by his body paralysed with terror, Carl turned and went into the flooded forest.

Next day he sat by the burnt-out fire. It lay just as he had left it, the cold ash still kept the form of the wood but was shrunk to nothing. Carl stirred the ashes in a last hope of finding a spark at the bottom; he sniffed wide-mouthed over the heap to catch the faintest smell of a glow, even the tiniest little germ that could be nursed up and fed; but there was no life left in the damp mass of charred sticks and ashes, which had already become one with the earth. The fire was out and remained out.

Carl had passed the night in a tree half senseless with defiance and cold, not far from the cave where his companions had sat clinging to one another and shrieking all night long. Gyuk's name was repeated again and again in their wailing, constantly renewing Carl's pain and at the same time hardening his heart as in a furnace. It rained in drowning torrents as on the night before, and towards morning it began again to hail and freeze. Then Carl heard his comrades leave their cave and start off southward through the trees, until their songs of lamentation were lost far, far away in the flooded woods. They were going home with bitter tidings, without shelter and without fire in the wintry weather.

But still they were bound for home, would only have to endure a night or two more in the open, and then Carl knew that they would be back in camp with their women and children in the mild valley where the tribe's ancient holy fire was burning. There they would be well received and thawed out, and all would soon be forgotten, all but

the fire-quencher and manslayer Carl. Of him a tale would be told that would cry to heaven, and the thought that he was doomed to a miserable death in the wilderness would season the food of the whole tribe.

Carl left the extinguished fire in the rock shelter and was now homeless, roamed here and there in the forest for a few days without knowing where he was, staggered around in the cold morasses unaware whether it was night or day. His eyes died away into his head. Now and then he tore a handful of flesh out of the body of one of the drowned animals, he did not suffer hunger; but the cold and the loneliness bent him to the ground like an unreasonably heavy burden.

Then one day he felt better; it was warm where he was, for without quite knowing it he had come into the southward trail and was approaching the valley where his brothers dwelt. He drew near the camp with a hard inward struggle; it was against his will, but he could not resist; he walked without a sound, could not even hear his own footsteps. Then he saw traces of them here and there, the camp could not be far off. And something was stuck up in the glade from which, as he knew, the path led down to the hut; he raised his eyes and saw what it was.

It was Gyuk's cloven skull, which they had set up on a pole. And beside it they had raised another and hung the carcass of a wolf on it. They had set this up for him, if he should venture near. Here was the parting of the ways. Yes, they had made that plain, in case he should come and turn his accursed eyes towards home. Carl straightened himself painfully and went.

He turned back to the north, up into the cold, extinct forests, naked, utterly alone.

## V

### THE ETERNAL FIRE

IT was snowing. Carl was on his way up the holy mountain, Gunung Api.

The big wet snowflakes thawed on Carl's hairy back, he did not notice them. At first he had thought it was the sky falling down in rags, but he soon knew better; it was only rain in another, still colder form. Carl meant to reach the top of the fiery mountain, from which his distant ancestor had brought down fire for his brothers. He grasped the axe in his hand; he was mad, there was no more fear in him after the nights of solitude and darkness he had spent in the freezing forest. Fire he must have, with or without leave. Carl panted his steaming breath into the falling snow and climbed upward, never once looking back.

The mountain lay far to the north, beyond all the valleys which had been the home of his people before the cold drove them out little by little, but Carl knew the way. Every evening as a child he had been used to peep out through the leaves of the hut and see that fiery red mouth breathing out smoke high up in the sky. He had heard stories of how the fire had once come down the mountain in a long glowing arm, devouring the forest for miles around, and those had been days of terror for the tribe; they had had to fly and hide themselves in swamps and water-holes, till He on high was good again. But in these lamentable latter days, when his folk had been forced to move farther and farther south, the mountain had been lost sight of,

and Carl did not quite know what mood it was in now. From a distance he had not been able to see the top for clouds.

But no sooner had he come a little way up the foot of the mountain than he was seized with anxious forebodings. Gunung Api, usually unapproachable for showers of stones and flashes of lightning, was strangely still. Could he be asleep? He never uttered a single thunderclap nor gaped with streams of fire or flaming fissures; he lay perfectly quiet, neither shaking nor rolling down hot rocks; he was cold and still. Perhaps this might be an ambush, and Carl was not too happy about going on, though on the other hand he would have been better served if the mountain had blazed a little.

Carl had long ago passed the line where trees and all growth ceased; he was climbing up a steep slope of oddly gnarled, caked rocks, all of which still bore the trace of fire; but they were cold, and ice water trickled through them, they looked like dead monsters, and Carl's spirits began to sink into despair; he guessed the truth.

Late in the afternoon Carl reached the summit. The last steep climb was over rough black ash, which cut his feet, mixed with stinking yellow and blue blocks, all cold and packed with wet snow. Carl reached the top, extinct and cold as the mountain he had climbed.

Yes, the burning mountain was quenched. Carl stood on the brink of the very summit, which formed a wide ring, and looked down into the mountain's yawning mouth. It was cold and full of snow. Around him the heaven and the abyss and the whole world lay desolate.

Never again would Carl find fire. The mighty spirit of Gunung Api was no more. The world was dead.

Icy cold and with bleeding feet Carl stood upon the roof of the extinct world, alone and without hope.

A day or two before on his way north he had crossed the pass by the ancient track of the beasts, now almost

washed out by the rain, for all the animals to the north of it had migrated; and then he had halted to take a last look to the south in a vain, misty hope of just catching sight of the smoke of his tribe's dwellings. And there his distress and abandonment had given place to a terrible mood which set him up against all the world, against everything and everybody. He had burst into a roar over the valley in an arrogance of pain, a new song over the fallen earth, a song of defiance, the No song; he had shown his teeth, had sung a challenge as he stood there on the pass utterly alone, with a future before him directly opposite to that which all other living creatures were following. Echo gave back his empty cries in his own broken voice, making him still wilder, surpassing himself in frenzy. And when he had fed his heart full with loneliness and denial, he had turned and faced the north wind, had gone into the winter. Ah, but then he still had hope. Then the thought had not struck him that he might not be able to fetch fire from his father's holy mountain. Was it not Gunung Api, the origin of all fire, the immortal Warmer and Devourer? There was always that resource beyond all others, of going to the great Fire Spirit itself and fighting for a spark to sustain life, and that hope had fed his heart, the spirit of adventure, luck or ruin.

Now he stood on the burnt-out mountain. The very source of fire was dried up. The Great Spirit was dead. Carl had sung for the last time. Here stood the fire-worshipper without fire, the forest man with no forest.

And so his goings upon the earth as a man began again from the beginning, alone in nakedness upon the cold earth.

An ape sat upon the brink of the abyss and grinned with long yellow teeth as Carl turned to go down, an old anthropoid ape which for some reason or other had not escaped from the country with its fellows and which had followed Carl up the mountain. It sat with its cold feet folded together and its hands in one another, shivering with

cold. When Carl became aware of it, it returned his glance with cunning, covetous eyes and turned its rainbow-coloured rump towards him, ran down a few paces to the next break in the steep slope and sat down again. Carl aimed at its head with a big lump of ice, but missed; a longing came upon him to eat its heart.

During the descent the ape kept its distance behind Carl, and he threw many stones and blocks of ice at it, but never hit. It continued to follow him.

Carl had hardly come down from the crater before a furious storm burst, blending mountains and sky in one. He killed an elk and slept under the warm body with as much of the animal's blood in him as he could drink. The vital warmth ebbed out of the elk in a course of a few hours, and he awoke under the weight of a stiffened carcass; but he had come through that night.

And when the sun broke through and he was already several leagues to the northward, the holy mountain showed a shining white snow-cap which never afterwards left it. The eternal fire had given place to the eternal snow.

More snow fell on the mountains, snow and again snow, and in the valleys it rained and hailed unceasingly. The Ice Age was coming on in earnest.

## VI

### UP TO THE ICE-SHEET

DAYS and weeks, Carl had no idea how many, saw him wander and clamber, always making for the north, nearer and nearer to the heart of winter. Much he went through, the cold became so fierce that at last he stumbled along in a dozing state, a stranger to himself from hardship; but he kept going, against the cold, he still wanted to see who it was that lived on the highest summits.

He lost sense of time, walked as in an eternity, only conscious of his existence through his daily struggle to keep alive. This endless journeying through the increasing rigours of winter taught him the nature of snow and ice; they were not great secrets. Ever and ever the North Wind howled: Help thyself!

The frost at night was deadly. All water was frozen solid in the clefts of the rocks, where the rime-covered stone bit the skin and held it. Carl would never have come through with his life if necessity had not forced him to impossible things and taught him to remember its laws.

One frosty night when he felt he would never see another morning, as he lay naked and worn out under an ice-clad rock, he got up half delirious and made for the warm lair of a bear that he had scented near by. He wept a little as he came into the warm hole, which was thick with the smell of wild beast and reminded him of his mother and his lost home in the jungle, where the stench of carrion rose in the sunshine outside the huts. He swallowed his tears, feeling that he had come home, sank down beside

the bear and instantly fell asleep. But the bear got up in the dark and sniffed, began to nibble at him; Carl awoke out of his senses and it came to a wrestling match in which Carl would certainly have got the worst of it but for his stone axe. He killed the bear and slobbered up its blood; afterwards he made a hole in its body and crept into the dead beast. He slept until the bear's carcass was cold, but did not leave the place until he had got the skin flayed off. The next night he slept under a rock with the skin on, and afterwards he always dragged it with him on his wanderings. Now he could stand the nights fairly well, and it was not long before he learned to wrap himself in the bear-skin in the daytime too. He stuck his feet into the skin of the bear's paws just as they were and could then stand the cold, rocky ground quite well. But in his fight with the bear Carl had lost an eye.

His food he took as he found it, and all he got was the live things he could catch, for there were no more plants or fruits. He stooped as he went along and picked up lemmings or field mice, turned over the stones under which they hid and put them in his mouth as they were, warm and alive. A mouse like that with its paunch full of savoury scraps and with sweet marrow in its little bones was a good morsel to take along on a journey. But otherwise when Carl had need of food he slew and devoured the beasts that were within his reach, from the hare and the wild pig to the great elk. He wielded the stone axe with a strength and dexterity no animal could resist; the mighty aurochs dropped as though struck by lightning when Carl dodged into position in front of it and planted the flint blade in its forehead. But the beasts were far between in the highlands and he often had to track and pursue for days, possessed more and more by hunger, before the saving game lay killed and smoking under his knees. He had no other warmth than the fresh blood and had to eat his meat raw, as he had no fire.

He endured this state of things, because he had to live; he took each day as it came, since there *was* nothing else; but exile set its mark on all his aptitudes, since at the same time he was growing; as a result he was never conscious of his existence except in the bitter regret of a better one which lay elsewhere, and that kept him going.

In his unresting raids he advanced farther and farther to the north. He was now up on the main Scandinavian range, where the snow was already old upon the peaks and had begun to freeze together and glide down towards the valleys through the sheer chasms.

The first time Carl saw the ice-sheet it lay many leagues away glaring blindly with its strange greenish shimmer, which mingled in abysmal depths with the blue of the sky and was afterwards to pass into his soul; he hunched his back as he always did when new mysteries appeared, and made for it.

Mountain ridges and moors lay between; he walked and climbed, crawled like a mite on hands and feet up the precipitous slopes, travelled on and forgot himself and remembered himself another time, somewhere else, still on the way, and time went by.

A day came when Carl was already well acquainted with the glacier and had laid it under his feet like any other road that had been trodden and was worn.

There too, up among the barren icefields, life was to be lived. Carl roamed about among the green ridges and fissures, heard a sighing far below him in the resounding caverns of the glacier's depths; he had no fear of it, for he had wrapped himself in two big bearskins, one with the fur inward, and he had bound up his feet with elk's skin, which he had contrived to hold together with thongs. At night he slept very well in some hole among the great masses of rock which floated on the surface of the ice. And if hard put to it by frost and storm, experience had already shown him that the snow itself was the best shel-

ter, and he dug himself down into it and made himself comfortable with his skins, until rested and fasting he crawled out into the light again and with the skins flying after him raced away to hunt in the snowfields.

Carl outgrew his mission. Originally he had pushed into the north to measure himself with the cold and avenge the mischief it had wrought, but the daily battle for life gradually took the place of his purpose. He found no other master in the highlands than the snowstorm and the glacier, which forced him to use all his strength simply for keeping the life in his wretched body. The peaks held no other secret than snow and ice. But the defiance with which he had started out turned to inflexible will and endurance in his unequal fight with the weather. The fiercer the resistance, the more resolutely he went ahead.

If the forest man in him had perished as he stood on the burnt-out mountain, the last trace of his animal soul was now paralysed as face to face with winter he lost the habit of imagining a hostile being who was to blame for it. As he trained himself daily and nightly to subsist, not by overcoming a resistance which was invincible, but by continual fighting, the foundation was laid in his mind of the first heathenism, the consciousness of the impersonal forces of Nature. His instincts hardened under the necessity of adapting themselves to the conditions he wanted to master. For that matter, he did not think, he vegetated in a sort of blind rage, ate up every living thing he came upon, and developed energy enough for a whole population. Ever and ever the North Wind howled: Help thyself!

Carl stayed in the North. He took up his abode absolutely alone among the cold mountains and began to support himself. The storm and the driving snow became his companions, the distances his home. And the winter increased in rigour. The nights yawned with a deeper and deeper darkness, and almost swallowed up the short day.

The northern lights were kindled like an outburst of

mad merriment in the clear frosty nights, ghosts in the sky of the world's dead fire; Carl looked up at their spectral play and shook his head, no richer for the apparition. He bent over the tracks of reindeer in the crunching snow—food, food for to-day!

Carl roamed about after game and lived in caves or under rocks, and if there was no suitable shelter where he intended to stay, he piled great stones one upon another with his bear's strength till they formed a hole in which he could pass the night in safety. This contrivance did much to relieve his anxiety about existence and released his forces in other directions. Sometimes he took special pains to build himself a house, or rather a grave, of big stones when he had come to a place where game was plentiful; he might then stay there for a dozen nights at a stretch and even allow himself an hour's rest now and then in the daytime. Then he would sit outside his barrow basking in the pale winter sunshine, while the flint flakes flew jingling about him, as he busied himself in fashioning new implements. His eye wandered from his work, and sometimes he would marvel that the sun should have grown so cold and should be so low in the sky. Nothing moved within his whole horizon without his seeing it.

And with him outside the barrow, a good three paces off, sat the dog pricking up his ears and looking out upon the world with a wise nose.

Carl was no longer entirely alone; for that matter he had never been so, as the beasts were company for him in the wilderness. But most of them avoided him personally. At first the old ape had kept near him, but it did not live long when once the cold became severe. It tried to support itself on the scraps of meat that Carl left, but showed no particular talent for that kind of food and lost flesh. Once Carl saw it pick up a bearskin that he had thrown away and try it on; it dragged about in it for a while, but could not manage going on all fours in it and threw it off again.

One morning Carl found the ape frozen stiff on the top of the barrow where he had slept. He stripped the heart out of it, but found it no good to eat; it was broken and wasted altogether with long affliction. After that the dog had joined him.

It began by the wild dogs hanging about his heels, since they were always sure of getting the greater part of the beasts he killed. Carl ate one of the dogs too now and then, if there was nothing else. But there was one of the pack that he spared every time, because he knew him from the others and had got used to seeing him. This one continued to follow him, breaking away from the pack, and Carl put up with his new hanger-on. The dog was very unobtrusive, never approached until Carl had finished eating and ran away most submissively if he did but look at it. It was rather a small dog with a pointed nose and a tail curled up sideways on its back. It gave up howling—Carl cured it by throwing stones—and learned to bark; for the poor beast couldn't hold its tongue altogether when anything important occurred. Carl and the dog always noticed things at the same moment, their never-resting eyes spotted everything that moved within a range of miles. But the dog was the best tracker. It was marvellously keen on the scent, when it accompanied Carl for days together as he hunted down the reindeer, and more than once it was able to do Carl services which ratified the armed truce between them.

Carl was fond of the dog. In the midst of the hard winter, when days and nights, weeks indeed, might go by like a single long moment of utmost strain, it soothed him to know that the dog remained faithful, never leaving the barrow at night; if his hunting should fail next day, he could always be sure of the dog, there was a good meal on him at any time. The dog seemed to understand Carl, was very polite but never came within arm's length. These somewhat strained relations continued however, and they

learned many things of one another as time went by. They could sit together so comfortably during the short winter days, when Carl had secured more than enough food for them both and the barrow was built and the sun shone a little withal on its distant path in the sky.

The flint rang and flew between Carl's hands; he always had a tool to work on when there was time. And as he sat chipping it he would suddenly begin to search the cold air with an eager eye and pass his nose over the flint—it had reminded him of fire! There was something in or about the flint when he splintered it which smelt like embers under the ashes. Carl distended his nostrils wide and drank in the scorched fumes, which also reminded him of grass after rain when lightning had cleansed the air, or of the morning mist in the forest, the heavy night sweat of plants evaporating in the sunshine. He drew a deep breath, sighed, and sighed again. Ah yes, he missed the fire. He would sit down to work at the flint simply for the sake of breathing in that odour of fire, near and yet so far, which hung about the flakes.

At rare intervals, when Carl did not feel the immediate pressure of life's uncertainty, he would take to examining his person, and then found that his skin was coated with dirt and vermin and clotted blood from all the beasts he had killed; he scraped off some of the crust and ate it; thus cleanliness came into the world.

Gradually his coat of hair grew thinner and thinner, since the skins he always wore on his body took the place of his own fur. But for the rest he was healthy, flourished exceedingly in the keen open air which allowed no lying idle. He increased in strength and expanded his wits, while with a truly universal appetite he walked into all the warm-blooded animals which like himself had chosen to stay in the north and adapt themselves to the new climate.

Meanwhile that winter passed. Carl took some time to understand this. The nights began to get milder and the

sun stood high just at a time when he had set his teeth to meet more cold, a harder existence, as the winter had taught him while it was waxing. But now it was on the wane.

And now at last, as the lengthening day brought a little more light, Carl showed signs of what he had gone through in the long and terrible darkness. While it lasted he had raged in a continual state of murderous despair, unconscious of himself, every corner of his soul taken up with self-defence; now the opposing forces were yielding, and he found vent in certain weird noises which spasmodically broke out of his throat; this was laughter. He had had a bad time. But he soon forgot it and recovered himself.

Summer came, and Carl had no other thought but that the cold was gone for ever. But winter came again, still harder, and this time Carl suffered the direst distress he ever had to endure, and came through it only half alive. Summer again put him on his feet, and now he took it in; he had grasped the seasons and got ready for the winter before it came.

Each new winter was longer and colder than the last, and the summer shrank; soon it was nothing but a rainy pause between the everlasting winters. The ice-sheet grew and spread.

The peaks now lay beneath an immense unbroken dome of snow, which grew continually with the ceaseless snowfalls on the heights. The snow pressed upon itself and was kneaded into a mighty flowing mash of ice which slid down from the mountain tops and began to fill the valleys. The short summers could do little to wear away the glacier but melted it into a mass and thawed the snow on its surface, where it froze again to ice; and thus it came about that the glacier stretched naked and gleaming with its greenish blue depths from the peaks far down into the valleys. The blink of this unfathomable green was to be Carl's horizon throughout all the years of his life, as the ice-sheet slowly

and imperceptibly spread from the mountains over all the land.

The ice-sheet displaced the earth itself, ground it to pieces, wiped it out under the mountainous weight of its moving ice. In the black nights Carl heard the subterranean thundering and grinding of the ice, tearing up the rocky ground, as it marched on and on under its own immense cold weight. And he gnashed his teeth at it.

On calm frosty days, when the air bit into every pore, his breath streamed out of his nostrils in thick white jets, and his blood pricked him like a shower of stars under the skin; he felt that merely to be alive was a victory.

## VII

## THE HUNTER'S LIFE

CARL was now fully grown and hardened by many winters; he was already leading a sort of regular, assured existence, though still always on the move. His unreasoning fight against the cold had given place to a more carefully planned way of living, after he had made out the changes of the seasons and learnt to make provision for the winter.

He dried meat in the good season and stored it against the cold weather. There was game enough to be had in winter too, but Carl found it best to build himself a deep and solid house of stones and live in it all through the cold season, and this made him turn his attention to collecting stores. Not that he had a really fixed home; every autumn he chose a new place near to fresh hunting grounds, but having found it he stayed there all through the long winter months. He took a great deal of trouble now in setting up his house, as it was to serve him so long, and he did it after a fixed plan. If he chanced upon some natural cave, he took possession of it after killing the bear which as a rule was its former occupant; but if there was none he built himself a barrow by rolling big stones together till they formed a chamber and then filling them in with smaller stones. He deepened this little stone hut by digging away the ground and lined it with moss and deerskins, and there he kept out the cold during the long dark winter nights. He did not give up hunting, but in winter never roamed so far that he could not get back to his house before night.

Though he had neither fire nor light, he found plenty to do in the cave when he could not sleep, and there was enough dried meat for his wants; he prepared his hides, sat eternally chewing the raw, tough skins inch by inch till they became flexible and soft. This way of treating them had been taught by hard necessity, like everything else he knew; in times of hunger he had had to keep himself going by gnawing off the scraps of flesh left on his skins, and in so doing he had discovered that the skins wore better and were pleasanter to have on if he chewed them all over from one end to the other. At the same time he had hit upon preserving meat by drying it.

When he was not chewing hides he sat like a blind man in pitchy darkness, patiently feeling with his fingers; pierced holes in the skins with a bone awl and joined them together with long strips cut from reindeer-skin. He knew how to gather the skins about him in a particular way so as to get most warmth out of them, but this had cost him long hours of labour and much racking of the brains. He twisted lines and yarns of gut, which afterwards served him for various purposes, and all this could well be done in the dark.

Meanwhile the winters grew steadily longer. The ice-sheet lay far down over the country. It could not be seen to move, but month by month and year by year it had come farther. Its extreme edge now lay right down in the lowlands, where the broken green ice came in contact with the remains of the dead forest. Where once bamboo and mimosa had grown, there now rose a shield of ice, high as a mountain; where the pitcher-plant had flourished in the warm swamps, dirty gateways now yawned in the wall of ice, from which cold rivers gushed with white, opaque waters. The icefield ran continually, froze again by its own cold and grew, moving forward and seizing one tract after another.

Carl was well acquainted with its nature, knew that it

was coming. He made calculations and comparisons and could then foretell pretty clearly the time when there would be nothing but winter all the year round, when the ice had taken the whole country. Unconsciously he gathered his strength for it, stored up experience, armed himself against the future. Every winter that passed was a hard school in which he learned the broad lines of preparation; there was not much now in his daily doings but had some bearing beyond the moment, even though he was not always conscious of a plan. The ice-sheet was upon him.

But the first few summers he spent alone might still be fairly warm, though very rainy. There were years of sheer deluge, when the mild rain poured down for weeks together and turned the country into a misty morass. Then the ice-field lay washed and clear with an abysmal green tint in its heights and depths; it swung round in windings miles across, fissured and strewed with fallen rocks from the snow-clad peaks, bearing them down into the misty lowlands.

Carl became almost amphibious in the short summers of the Deluge, he learned to ferry himself on tree-trunks, which he poled along with a branch; the swollen rivers and lakes could no longer stop him. If the water got too deep, he slashed and dug down into it with the broad end of his pole and got along just the same. The dog went with him, now sitting at the other end of the trunk, now swimming at the side. How wet they always were, with streaming hair both of them, with their skins soaked through and benumbed right up to their eyes; but they did wonderfully well on it.

In the brief summers Carl relapsed into the careless existence of the bushman, threw off his skins and wandered about with nothing on but his flint weapons. He drank in the warmth at every pore, lay all day long baking in the sun, when for once it broke at last through the rolling clouds. But his winter fierceness lay within, only wait-

ing for the cold; he had acquired a memory. He never went so far away as to lose sight of the green ice-blink against the sky.

Carl's summer was a ceaseless roving, when he travelled far and wide in pursuit of all kinds of game. He made little tents of faggots when night overtook him and went on the next morning. In the course of his wanderings he reached the southerly regions of his former home and found that the forest had now almost decayed into a sodden unrecognizable swamp. The trunks of the big trees were hardly to be distinguished; they formed an almost impassable substratum of rotting timber, which was beginning to be overgrown with weeds and bushes.

The jungle never recovered. Every year some of the ruined trees sent out ground shoots, which tried to raise their heads, and the mud engulfing the buried palms was green with fresh sprouts, but they never grew into trees; the next winter wiped them out again. None of the true jungle plants recovered its vigour, but they kept alive in the form of little crippled offshoots, some of which turned out hardy and were afterwards able to transmit the growth of the forest, though on a very different and dwarfed scale.

There were other forms, however, which formerly had been of no account in the jungle, but which now shot up and began to collect into a new forest: the pines, which could stand the cold. Spruce and fir spread rapidly on the site of the jungle, and even the juniper, which in the warm forest had been a giant cypress-like tree, survived the winter with a few small, slow-growing ground shoots, which showed a resemblance to the domes and pyramids of the mother tree, though only in miniature. Other plants developed in the contrary way in the new conditions, from herbs and bushes into giant trees, showing a capacity for shedding their leaves in winter and sprouting again in the spring. There were the birch and the oak, which before had only been bushes on the floor of the jungle; there were

the aspen and the willow and many more; they now came into power and began to form thickets and to stretch out their transient leaves in summer when the nights were light.

Everything was adapting itself to the new order of the changing seasons, since now it could not be otherwise. Many of the animals that had migrated came back to the North in the warm season and continued to do so, though they gave ground from year to year as the icefield advanced.

Nearly all the birds made for the north when the sun began to throw dazzling fans of light over the flooded regions whose outlines they knew so well. They did not mind the abundance of water, if only the sun coaxed up grass and reeds and a sufficient supply of worms in it. There were some of course who at once took to the South and never left it, the flamingo and the pelican and other equally dainty birds of somewhat doubtful exterior but with very delicate feelings in their webbed feet, and thus they go out of the story. All the rest—geese, ducks and swans, plovers, larks, curlews—Carl greeted as they came whirring from the south in flocks as thick as clouds and with a joyful song of homecoming dashed down upon the miles of lakes, where the old forest raised its pallid branches and roots above the surface as far as the eye could reach.

Here the frogs croaked, till the stork came and swallowed them, here worms and swimming small fry bubbled in the sunny water, attracting the ducks; great pike ploughed flashing furrows in the surface, pursued by the otter, and among the heaped-up trees whole crowds of beavers built their towns.

There was an appetite and a hatching and breeding beyond compare, and Carl revelled in eggs and game and passed long lazy weeks among the islands, where the bees were building in the hollow dead trees.

Many of the land animals too made an attempt to find their way back to the north in the warm season. As Carl

sat looking out from the high ground he might catch sight of a familiar figure against the sky, far, far away on the southern edge of the earth, which lay in dazzling fans of sunlight under the clouds—the lion with his heavy forequarters, an almost invisible speck in the distance; or he might catch the fine lines of some chilly antelope that had perhaps travelled hundreds of miles from its new pastures in the south simply for a glance at the northern home it had abandoned. These were only solitary rovers and perhaps outcasts, and they always turned back when they had surveyed the devastated forests from a height. Their destiny pointed farther and farther to the south, and soon their place here would know them no more.

Some land animals came on a visit for the summer and went away again when it got cold, but they were fewer and fewer; they could not make paths for themselves in the air like the birds and fall into the way of annually recurring migrations. The fleet wild horses adopted this habit and a few other light-footed ones, but apart from them the icefield soon set a landmark between those who would stay and those who would go. The first summer or two the hippopotamus tried to return; he came splashing up through the marshes but was piqued at all the tree-stumps and branches at the bottom and did not appear again next year; he showed an ungrateful fatherland his back, and it was a broad one.

The very first summer there was a great rush of the tailless apes who lived on the ground like man; of course they had forgotten the winter and established themselves, with a great deal of lofty self-assertion and trampling on the rights of all other creatures, in a mountain thicket where there were nuts and berries enough to see them through the warm months in riot and revelry.

When Carl came down into the lowlands next spring, he found the skeletons of the whole band on a little island, which they had reached in an attempt to escape from the

cold. A storm had surprised them, and he could still see by their bare bones how they had sat huddled together in a bunch with their arms round one another's necks and had frozen to death. They had always annoyed Carl by prying on him and mimicking him, so he gave himself the pleasure of singing a song over the assembly. They were the last he ever saw. Farther south they must also have died out, in spite of their always having right on their side and everlastingly canting about being true to themselves.

Wiser was the mammoth, of whom Carl saw a good deal in the first long years of his hunting, when time seemed never ending as he changed and grew into a man; he and the mammoth kept each other company at first. Carl had not yet taken to hunting this monster, he was not ripe for that, so they could well go about together without interference or jealousy; they lived on different food.

The mammoth no longer resembled his old elephant self; he had grown a long coat of hair in the cold, so that he looked like a mossy little movable mountain as he stamped about among the blocks of granite and shook the rime off the larches before fumbling the green needles into himself with his trunk. In winter he was a familiar figure on the mountains, where Carl might come across the mighty beast in some snow-covered copse of fir, standing under the lee of a rock with his trunk curled up and the snow driving between his wide-spreading tusks. There he stood rocking in the snowstorm with his mountainous weight, overgrown with long wool between his mighty legs, infinitely patient; and under his bushy brows, full of snow, he looked out upon the weather with his little lively, experienced eye like loneliness itself.

In calm nights of hard frost, when Carl awoke in his stone-set grave, he heard the hollow cough of the mammoth echo among the crevasses and die away in the resonant eternal stillness; so the old one was on his way up

the glacier in the gleam of the northern lights, careful how he planted his feet among the cracks and hummocks of the ice. He made long journeys over the icefield in search of the island of rock, often abrupt peaks, where the dwarf pine grew which was his food.

But in summer the mammoth went about trumpeting lazily with a dainty appetite among the young birches and played tricks with his food, twisting it up over his back and twirling it round in his sensitive trunk before he thought fit to put it into his mouth. Then he shed his coat and left the coarse wool hanging on thornbushes and thickets.

The mammoth belonged to the light nights, when the birch stems glimmered away into the distance like white, flecked limbs; he could be seen far off on the heights, pitching as he stood and flapping his ears for the midges, where the sky still kept a yellow sheen at midnight, and the deep, sated grinding of his sluggish teeth sounded far away like the rumble of the rocks on the ground beneath the glacier.

But as the summers shrank the mammoth came more and more rarely down from the mountains; he preferred to go farther north when spring came, so fond had he grown of cold surroundings, and Carl could not help taking this as a hint for the future; he knew the mammoth was wise.

Carl thought seriously. His childhood was vanished now and had left nothing but a feeling that endless years had gone by; the time he had lived alone in the wilderness might well have been a cycle of milleniums. He felt the want of nothing, was complete master of his existence and was always finding new means of making it easier. He feared nothing in heaven or earth, had subjected all the beasts to himself with the axe and the spear that flew from his hand, and with the blind Powers he encountered in the snowstorm and the darkness he kept silence; they were his hard life itself, inevitableness and defiance forced into one and given shape. He had vanquished Nature and himself.

But now he felt very lonely. Why was he grown so strong? Was there no other aim for his forces than simply living? Time did not seem long to him; he either hunted for the day or provided for the future, even in the dark he could work, and if it chanced that there was time for leisure, he sat on his barrow for days and nights together following the movements of the stars, the sun's habits in the sky, and he began to know all about the paths of the heavenly bodies, how often they came back and how long it took.

His eye was always searching high and low, hither and thither, new things were always falling into his hands, and if he had but once seen or touched a thing, it was fixed for ever in his memory and lived on there. He was always open for observation, always occupied, each new discovery drove the blood violently to his head; he ran around like a bird building its nest in a fever of hatching heat when new things came upon him; his head was always creating and everything generated in his hands. But he was not happy.

One summer he took it into his head to follow the trail of his tribe to the southward, which led from one abandoned settlement to another, several weeks' journey down into the country. They had long ago quitted the place where Carl had left them, and the forest had died out; Carl had to cross mountains and go through utterly unknown regions where he did not feel secure, before at last he saw the smoke rising from a camp among the trees and knew it was they. The place was not at all warm, far to the south as it was; how did they manage, he wondered? He looked at the smoke, longingly, but it recalled the picture of the tribe sitting camped about the fire or lying in the huts around and wrangling, pouring out abuse day in and day out, with never a blow. If he had approached the camp that day when he came across the traitor's pole they had set up for him, he would have heard the irrepressible

voices barking their spite one against another, and he knew that was what he would find now if he went on. Besides, did he bring fire, had he in his long exile refound what in his own mind he regarded as the one condition of his return? He went no farther. But he spent that summer in the wilderness to the north of the forests where various wild tribes besides his own had settled, far apart and as always at bitter feud with one another.

From his look-out on the heights Carl often saw the smoke of the other tribes' settlements, far to the south, but the thought of trying to get in touch with them or even fetching fire from their camp never once occurred to him. Advances to these strangers could only be imagined in one way.

And that summer it actually did happen that Carl came now and then upon a man who had been inquisitive and rash enough to stray too far north into the desolate marches. On these occasions he was able to satisfy his longing for human beings. It might be a success or it might be a disappointment, according as it was a young person with rich blood or an old sinewy savage that you couldn't get your teeth into. Carl was long haunted by not altogether pleasant memories of such a meeting in the form of indigestion; it was a skinny old forest man that he had surprised catching crabs in a brook and had devoured unobserved, so to speak, on the spot. Ugh, his teeth ached for a long time, it almost turned him against food of his own flesh and blood. His craving for human society fell off not a little after he had tried a dozen or so. Besides which, it ended in nobody venturing north of the woods any more, either in bodies or as single stragglers; rumours had begun to spread among the tribes of a wicked ogre up in the wastes, half bear and half man, who tore and devoured all that came that way. So Carl went up north again towards his own cold regions.

But when for some weeks he had had to fall back upon

his usual exclusively animal diet, he began to have visions of a really young full-blooded fellow-man just once, only once again, and the result was that his progress towards the solitudes was somewhat hesitating and full of digressions.

It was on one of these excursions, undertaken in a hope which he half concealed from himself, certain of being disappointed, that he met his life's wonder.

It was a human being, at last another creature with its forelimbs off the ground. Carl sighted his prey one day in a desolate valley making at full speed for a cave, and then, when he had cut off that retreat, running wildly down the valley, over a stream and away behind a hill—and the hunt began. It lasted for three whole days and nights and only ended in a far distant region which was quite unknown to Carl and which helped not a little to make this hunt Carl's great adventure. For the game, which ran fast and with more endurance than any reindeer, brought him to where all land came to an end and there was only water, an immense lake as far as the eye could reach; this was the sea.

As soon as the man took to flight it struck Carl as curious that he tried to make neither for the forest nor the mountains but turned off across the low-lying swamps and steppes which lay for miles to the west towards the sunset. Were there people living in those parts, or had the creature no tribe to go home to?

What surprised him still more was that the man seemed to have something on, not skins like himself but something else that flapped and fluttered in the wind as he ran. If it was a kind of clothes, he might well need it, for the year was far advanced with hail and biting winds; but Carl did not know of any but himself who had thought of clothes against the cold. Another thing he noticed was that the fugitive made no offer to defend himself nor did he try to escape by stratagem, but simply ran straight ahead

as the only means of safety, pretty much as the wild cattle would have done. All he could do here was to overtake his game or run it to death.

Carl had to use all his strength to keep the trail and at first for several hours the man in front increased his lead. But then Carl began to overtake him, almost imperceptibly, but enough to make him keep on. That night Carl rested a few hours, ate and slept, and next day he had to follow the trail till past midday before sighting his game.

The next night the hunted man had tried a few feeble tricks, dodging in and out of water and hiding on stony ground, but Carl tracked him down, started him and followed closer on his heels than before. Many, many leagues they had covered and had come into country that was perfectly strange to Carl.

Herds of wild horses rushed up now and then and galloped off in a circle, stood still and looked at Carl, who hurried past in a long striding trot. Carl ground his teeth as he pursued, he was not in any gentle mood now. Otherwise the hunt not very different from his daily experience, only this time his game was a nobler one and more eagerly desired than usual.

On the last day the man in front made but little headway, his limbs seemed to be ailing. They had come out to the great water and were running up along the shore, where the fine sand was mixed with round pebbles and a multitude of curious things. Carl ran on with inquisitive looks at all there was to be seen on the beach, and his nose quivered in the strong sea smell, but he did not give himself time to stop. That would have to wait just a few moments longer; the man in front was not getting on at all, sailing along dead beat, and from behind he seemed to be suffering badly. At last he collapsed in the sand, got up and tried to struggle on, but only on all fours; and the hunt was ended.

Carl approached his prey in long redoubled leaps, but without throwing his spear or preparing to use his axe; teeth would be enough here, and he licked his lips with the tip of his tongue, hungry, but above all thirsty.

Then he saw that it was a woman. She lay on her knees with her face in the sand, awaiting her doom. She made no sound when Carl touched her; he turned her over, and their eyes met. All thought of murder died within him. She should surely live.

But he showed his teeth in a last vindictive feeling of what she had cost him in toil and longing.

Terror at being in his power faded at once from her eyes, when she saw that she was to live, and she too bared all her teeth at his as though to bite—but neither of them bit. And that was the first smile.

They kept together after that. They two were alone upon the ice-sheet, the only human couple in the North.

The sun broke through the clouds and saw that there were no others . . . thus arose monogamy.

## VIII

### THE SEA

HERE it may be related that many, many years after, when he had lived for a generation up country with his woman, Carl fell a victim to an incurable, but not exactly wasting sickness, a mighty longing for the sea.

It began by his never being able to forget the meal of fresh mussels he and the woman had enjoyed on the beach after he had caught her and they had called forth the smile on each other's ferocious faces. That meal when Carl had tasted salt food for the first time had afterwards seemed like the only real one in his life; when he chanced to remember it he would nod without knowing it, as though he had hit upon some important new thing.

And connected with that taste was a strangely clear and happy recollection of all that he had discovered in those few hours he and Mam—so she was called when the children she bore had given her a name—had rested on the shore, before they started homeward to the icefield. Carl had examined the round stones and other unknown things, a good many of which turned out to be eatable, though of mixed value, and he had sniffed in long breaths from that lake, which was deeper in colour than the waters he knew inland and had no shore on the opposite side, so far as could be seen. Its water had been of a new, wild taste, quite good but not too much of it. White birds with a rank cry of their own flew over the waves, which seemed to be on a great migration.

Had Carl stored up within himself a resolve to come back and afterwards forgotten it, was that what was calling? Why had the day been so lovely, so sweet through and through, that the memory of it was the hidden origin of all that Carl later managed painfully to achieve in the way of goodness? He would shake his head many years after and Mam, looking up from her burdens as they trudged along, could trace a fine fleeting light passing over her man's fierce features, something resembling the smile of that day on the sands. Mam humped her bundles with the everlasting infant on top into a better place on her back; now she knew that her man was longing, longing, but that it was scarcely of her he was thinking. And yet there was nothing in the world before which she bowed more deeply under her load than her man's holy longing, her share in which was to follow him in dumb fidelity till death.

Yes, Carl longed for the sea. The years were taking him farther away from that one moment on the beach, his life had become all winter, but that moment stood by itself, the only one. The unknown had entered into his heart in that brief while, as he sat on the white sand and watched the waves flock together and wander away, out where he could not longer see. There was something in the wonder of that moment that had passed into his blood and was afterwards to be the destiny of him and his race.

But he did not know and never discovered that his longing for the sea was mystically and eternally bound up with the dawn in his heart in that instant when for the first time he looked into Mam's poor hunted eyes.

## IX

### MAM'S HABITS

AND then the everyday round. Winter came and Carl and Mam went to meet it of their own free will, moved northward up to the edge of the icefield, where he was used to live and felt at home. Here they spent their lives amidst many vicissitudes, at first always on the move but afterwards settled in a fixed home, as the years went by and they became a family.

Cold was nothing new to Mam, she had learnt to pull through every season. Little by little Carl got a glimpse of all the shifts she knew of to keep life going; they were very unpretending and so obvious that no one accustomed to live in the jungle would have thought of them; Mam had simply put them in practice. The clothes she wore when Carl found her were her own invention, and it did Carl good to acknowledge that two people far apart, not having the slightest idea of each other's existence, could happen upon the very same thing; this it was that broke his egoism and made him gratefully admit Mam into his solitude, and they became the first little community on earth. In the forest man and woman approached each other like wolves, and no woman became a mother without the marks of the man's teeth on her neck; Carl and Mam were the first human couple who lived together and looked into each other's eyes.

Mam's clothes however were somewhat different from Carl's as regards material; they were not skins, but a kind of plaited and felted frieze of mammoth's wool, which she had gathered from thornbushes and twisted into a coarse

yarn; it was very thick and warm. On her feet she wore plaited bast shoes and she never let go of a cunningly wrought basket of reeds in which she carried all her little things, the queerest treasures consisting of all sorts of trifles such as some birds have a habit of collecting. Here she kept kernels, teeth and pebbles which had attracted her by the colour and roundness, feathers, faded flowers, bog-cotton, all kinds of shining things and everything that was soft, besides of course her food, which was also of a strange nature. When the basket grew too heavy, Mam made caches of her things under stones and in caves, never threw anything away but easily forgot what she had hidden. She was so good.

Carl never really got to know how Mam came to be living in the wilderness or how she had managed to survive the cold; she was very sparing of words. This was not from secretiveness or reluctance, but because no connected past seemed to exist for her. She was all life, but only in the moment; what she remembered flashed across her like the shadow of a past experience but did not live in her. She could shake her wild hair in the most expressive way when Carl asked her how she came to leave her tribe, and she often tried to tell a long story, which judging from the play of her features suddenly seemed very present to her; but nothing came of it beyond an abundance of wealth or affliction in her eyes and a few words, or rather singsong, and with that she thought she had exhausted a whole world. And Carl had to be satisfied with that. What she was he could see well enough, warm and always as near him as possible, and what she could do; what more story was needed?

From what Carl was otherwise able to infer, Mam, for some reason unconnected with her nature, had been an outcast like himself and had taken to the wilderness, and this must have been at a very young age, since she was only just

grown up but had evidently spent many winters in solitude. She must no doubt have had something of the same character as Carl's, which had made her different from all the rest of the tribe and given her the power of living alone and without fire. The North Wind had blown the hair from her forehead and she had learnt to help herself.

Strange it was to note how she had acquired in the school of winter the same powers of resistance as Carl but in another way. He came to see this by degrees as they got used to each other and he discovered Mam's habits. She had not taken to hunting; all animals inspired her with fear and nothing else, especially the smallest of all, such as mice, which would send her screaming up the rocks; on the other hand she ate with a tranquil mind ants, snails and anything that crawled, also flies and other vermin, but rigidly excluded spiders; she seemed to distinguish between animals by unfathomable rules of her own.

Beyond this she lived almost exclusively on vegetable food, and here, guided or not by taste, she had invented a whole series of new kinds of victuals. When she could no longer get the fruits of her jungle home, she had fed herself on grass and roots and herbs which she found in the bogs and rocky wastes where she lived, and her very existence, full of life and health, proved that she had sense to discover the nourishing things. This was well enough in summer, and far on into autumn there were plenty of berries in the swamps, which Carl too had found useful, but how had she got through the winter, when there were neither worms nor herbs in the wilds? She had no thought-out idea of laying in stores for the cold season like Carl, and yet she had managed.

It was simply her general hoarding instinct which had been carried so far that she had been able, even for long foodless periods, to make shift with the contents of her basket or of her other hiding-places. She collected every

possible thing and as much as possible of it, and this blind impulse had become one with her self-preservation, she *always* had supplies; thus she survived the winter.

Mam knew how to dry various edible roots, or they had dried themselves quite naturally because she hoarded them, and of such commodities she had great heaps laid by. But better than anything she liked the seed of certain kinds of grass, these she picked and stored with special care in great quantities. It must have begun by her loving these grains because they were small and looked to her like babies, tiny little wild lambs, which had to be nursed and were her very own; and here she had known no bounds, had tried to get in a simply endless number just so as to have them, a whole world of dear little babies. Afterwards she had eaten the grains, when forced by want. A handful of them was enough to keep Mam going for the day.

She collected particularly the seeds of a tall grass with a long rough beard, the wild barley. Carl knew it well, he had tasted a grain of it now and then, when it happened to catch in his hair, and it had a pleasant taste. But Mam hoarded masses of it every year, and soon it became a regular addition to the daily food of both.

The years went by, and Mam developed her habits, while they moved about below the icefield and spent a longer or shorter time in each place; and Carl left her to her own concerns, went about his hunting and improved his implements; from time to time he would notice that Mam had some new thing in hand which seemed to come quite of itself. She industriously gathered mammoth wool and the hair of other beasts wherever she went and then sat at home by the barrow and twined it into yarn, which she plaited into clothes. For summer wear she made herself light skirts of rushes and twisted grass fibre, trying one sort after another until at last she kept to a plant that was specially suited for this: a little herb with a blue flower, flax, and this and Mam's tireless fingers were afterwards

well acquainted. Mam plaited baskets of withies for her corn and smeared them tight with clay, so that nothing should run out; in this way her sex would at last stumble upon pottery; but here as in so many other things there was no real progress before Carl had come at fire again.

There were already several children. Mam had her first baby one day when Carl was away, and next time she left the barrow and retired behind a big stone, where Carl could hear her wailing a little, until an hour or so later she appeared with the new child. They were small blind creatures with a brown nap all over their bodies, and at first they were nearly always asleep in the plaited bag on Mam's back. But they grew apace; the eldest potbellied youngster was already strutting about outside the door investigating everything that lay loose in his path. His father made him a flint axe no bigger than a thumbnail, with which the little man wrought doughty deeds among the puppies that swarmed around the settlement. Then Carl could once more look upon shaggy little children flying bits of down in the air and playing at birds, as they had done in the lost forest; but now it was very different.

Their house had to be built spacious and strong, so that the whole family might have room to sit in it. Carl rolled a big stone before the entrance when he went hunting, and then Mam sat comfortably below with the children and went on with her plaiting. In the daytime she pushed aside a smaller stone so that a little light reached her underground; otherwise it was pretty dark for her in the barrow, especially in winter. They always lived in one spot through the cold season, and in time it became quite an extensive settlement; Carl had to build small separate huts for their stores of roots and corn and wind-dried meat. He always took care to choose a place that was already sheltered, a natural cave for choice, but failing that just a natural rock shelter, to which he built on, or a hollow in the ground if nothing else offered.

The ice-sheet forced them to keep on moving, often literally, when the edge of the ice came marching on over the settlement. In this way they had been pushed so far to the south that their position was now pretty nearly where Carl was born and had spent his childhood; he knew it by many landmarks, it was in the neighbourhood of the extinct volcano. But where the jungle used to grow was now a solid shield of ice extending for leagues and deeper in its green crevasses than the highest trees of the forest. It was a marvellous difference, and Carl, who had witnessed the change, at times found it hard to know himself again.

Meanwhile moving became more and more difficult. Mam had more children and trailed about heartily content with one on her back and one on her arm, leading another by the hand and with several more clinging with their little claws to her skirt; but they had so many other indispensable things now to take with them that it became almost impossible. Mam dragged along more than her own weight, always reserved and always good; they managed the move, because the icefield said they had to, but it could not go on like this.

Carl himself had also introduced so many new things which made it hard to break up when they had once settled down in a place; he had begun to keep animals about his home. For it often happened when hunting that he was able to capture some animal alive, the foal of a wild horse or a reindeer cow, and these he took home with him and kept tethered by thongs near the house. If game chanced to fail, there were then these captive animals to fall back on. In course of time this practice spread, so that he had several wild horses grazing at home, besides wild cattle, reindeer and goats, and they bred in captivity and soon became numerous. The wolves attacked them at night and Carl then put up fences of branches and hurdles. In the autumn he slaughtered most of his stock and dried the meat for winter use, but some that had become quite tame and

half belonged to the family were allowed to live over the winter. Mam and the children fed them with grass they had gathered in the summer and dried. The half tamed horses and reindeer were not so difficult to take on a journey, they even submitted to Mam's loading some of her burdens on their backs and thus they did service. The children were soon on good terms with the quiet little ponies, which were scarcely wild any longer, and took it into their heads to bestride them when they were on the trail.

And so the procession is formed, Carl leading with his stone axe, always cool-headed and always dangerous. He has only one eye, but it is everywhere, it flashes upon everything that moves for miles around. He puts his hand to the big stones that lie in his path, rolls them over and pushes them aside with his feet, as he goes on with never a halt, his eye clinging to the horizon; and behind him come Mam and her load, the children and the domestic animals in pretty fellowship, the small persons riding on the big. And the rain comes down. Where the sky ends the ice-blink beckons home and drives abroad. Yes, here comes the Stone Age man with his belongings.

But the journeys came to an end at last. One year they established themselves on a mountain height which they could not be persuaded to leave, and here they were surrounded by the ice-sheet.

This height was many leagues in circumference and fairly level on the top, but so high that the ice did not surmount it, though it spread all round. On this island, which soon lay cut off by miles of ice on every side, they made their home, while the ice-sheet grew and pushed on.

The family increased; there were boys and girls beyond their parents' powers of counting and well into the notion of *many*. But each one of them asserted himself sufficiently and ate enough for a human being with or without a number. Mam, who hitherto had only applied her collecting activities to temporary things, had now found her true voca-

tion and seemed to be bent on producing a population. Every year, when the short summer returned and the mountain island was gay with flowers and foliage, there was a new down head peeping out of the bag on Mam's back.

The elder ones were shooting up. Already Carl had sons nearly grown-up, whose eyes were beginning to search the ice-blink on the horizon and whose nostrils quivered keenly with a promise of great hunters to be.

## X

### CARL STRIKES FIRE

CARL and his family could not have kept alive on their northern mountain isle in the midst of the ice-field, with winters increasingly severe and only short rainy intervals of summer, if Carl, after having had to do without fire for so many hard years, had not at last found it again.

But just as he had been taught by growing up in adversity that existence never renews itself until it has destroyed all hope, so did he see fire spring from the heart of winter, in his direst need. It did not come about by a lightning stroke, a shower of red-hot stones or other gracious efflorescence of fire from on high; Carl sat in the midst of the ice, poor and god-forsaken, and fought his way to fire, strove so long with the hard stone that it came. And yet it was a great wonder, that day when fire was born between his hands, a thrilling hour of victory which made him rich for all time and established him as lord of the earth.

Carl had known for many years that in some way unknown to him fire was present in flint or in the air about it; he could catch a breath of it when he split off flakes for knives or hammered out larger implements, a powerful burnt smell which expanded his senses through the memory of all it held within it—the smell of the strong embers beneath the ashes, the jungle, the bubbling swamps, the thunderstorm; and it became a regular habit with him, which Mam knew was inseparable from her man but which

she could not grasp, that whenever he was working on flint he would put his face down to the chips and seem to drink a rapid draught with open mouth and wide distended nostrils. Then it was that Carl scented fire and all its nature, then did his spirit take flight where Mam could not follow him. It even happened, and by no means rarely, that the fire showed itself, especially when Carl was chipping flint in the dark; sparks would then fly from it, come and gone in an instant, sprinkling their colours like little messengers from the rainbow and the starry world between Carl's hands and making his thoughts breed fast.

But when the winters became so hard after the ice-sheet had closed about Carl's home, when the cutting frost was all about his cave, with ice everywhere ringing and snapping in the tense air, when it grew so cold that Mam and the children had to stay below, lying packed in layer upon layer of skins—then Carl felt as in the first desperate days when he found himself naked and alone and the cold threatened his life: Now, now something must be done, the impossible. . . .

And then he did what lay nearest his hand, following up what he knew; he chipped flint. Day after day he sat before the entrance of the hut in faint sunshine or wet mist, wrapped to the eyes in bearskins, and struck off flakes. He never gave himself a rest, he hammered and smashed up one flint block and pounding stone after another and watched them flying off in the biting frosty air; he sat among heaps of splinters and did not give up, waded in flakes till the sun which showed far away, lifeless and cold like a lump of ice, had traversed its flat path and was stooping to the horizon behind the endless snowfields. Night came with the northern lights and great trembling stars, and the barrow was snowed under; a brownish hole where the warmth of those below ground ascended was the only sign of life.

A herd of reindeer went past with creaking pasterns in

the creaking snow; they bent their frosted muzzles to the snow, hesitated and uttered the strange, flayed guttural sound—*hraw*—which is their language. And the northern lights hung glimmering over the ice-sheet up into the sky like the lone silent laughter of a madman. The Pleiades twinkled mistily, showed all their stars and hung again bedewed in their eternity.

Next day Carl sat before the entrance of his house in the feeble daylight and broke stones, hopeless and untirable, with a tight-shut face; only his nostrils continued to quiver and work. He kept himself warm by his mad labour, that was all he got by it; poor Mam thought her man was bewitched by the cold.

But Carl kept on. If the fire was there, there must be a way of driving it out. It must be sitting in *one* of the stones, and even if it should be his cursed luck that the very last stone in the world held fire within it, why then there were stones enough to last a thousand years, he would grow old in smashing them, but he would do it. When his store was finished, he fetched more, dragged all the loose stones in the neighbourhood home to the settlement and hammered them to pieces. He got no fire. And the bitter winter went by.

In the summer Carl fetched stones home from every part of the mountain isle, all that lay loose on the surface of the ground, a whole mound of stones lay outside the cave; he did not do much else that summer but go out in the cold deluge and carry stones home, stones, stones; and Mam the tongue-tied let him see her tears. She and the children gathered and gathered, though there was hardly anything eatable left on the island. The tame animals were gone, what was to happen? Carl left his hunting gear untouched, and when Mam turned to him with moist eyes, he gave her a look as though he did not know her. He was not like himself, had become so grimy and ingrained about the face and was always covered with chips and dust right up

to the hairs about his single eye, which looked uncannily white and heated; the other empty socket was full of dust and slime. Now and then he himself felt something of what was in Mam's thoughts, that the frost had gone into his soul.

But that winter he found fire.

Suddenly one day, after he had broken up stones as usual by the hundred and was sitting half stupefied by the scorched smell which had now begun to affect him vaguely like a dream of sleep, of one day falling asleep and sleeping for ever, he picked up a stone which instantly gave great broad sparks against the flint; he struck again, harder, and the stone rained fire, blue sparks, whole long worms of fire which crawled in the air and lasted a moment in glowing curves before they died. Fire, fire!

Then Carl's strength failed him, he turned hot all over like a miserable sinner and deadly faint, had to sit still a while. His arms sank weakly, he dared no more, looked about him beseechingly, turned his eye to the sun which glittered blindly far away as though dazed by the cold. He looked around upon the snow-covered island and upon the icefield stretching bare and white as far as the eye could reach, and never had he seen his world so clearly as at that moment, he knew for the first time that so it was. And he breathed out a deep sigh.

Then he tried again and saw the sparks fall big and living on the snow, where they went out, leaving a little hollow with a spot of coal at the bottom. He sobbed and sobbed again, a profound weakness fell upon his heart in the pause while hopelessness gave place to a joy in which he dared not yet believe. But it was true. And he arose self-possessed, with a feeling of deep earnestness that came from within him; he scarcely drew breath as he made preparations for a fire. He knew what was wanted from the time when he tended the flames long, long ago in the forests, tinder to catch and spread the fire and wood to

keep it going. A few moments later he had a flame. He let a spark fall on the dry tinder and at once saw a spot of fire form and begin to smoke, turning black with a glowing edge and spreading; he blew on it cautiously till the glow grew dazzling and began to sing, and then he hurriedly strewed shavings on it and left off blowing—and instantly a flame rose straight up into the air, a little blue and yellow soul with a hot breath; it flagged a little, jumped up and down, vanished and came again nibbling at the smoke as Carl blew; he gave a long puff and stopped—and then the flame seized on the shavings with a greedy little flutter and began to burn! Carl lighted a branch. Here was the fire. Now he had it and had nobody to thank for it, it was his own—fire, fire!

Mam heard a yelling outside the cave, huge shouts and songs of joy, and the earth swayed over her head from dancing feet, as though a bear were taking great leaps and coming down heavily on his paws—was that her man's voice? Her soul grew dark within her and she crept out, certain of her doom; now it must be all over with Carl and with the rest of them. She found him up on the top of the dwelling, dancing about and swinging a burning branch in his hand, she saw the *fire*—and then Mam grinned, stood still with her feet turned in and laughed in a dazed way. She grasped what had happened. So that was it; her husband and god had vouchsafed to create fire. It did not surprise her very much. What was he not able to do? Still, it was good. Mam blinked at the fire and laughed. But Carl stormed and howled with joy and exulted at her, Mam, Mam! The youngsters came crawling up, sneezed at the frosty air and saw the fire, stretched their necks and came nearer with wary eyes.

What a day it was! It was the only day, the day without beginning or end. The fire was triumphantly consecrated with dried meat and old tallow, the first sacrifice rose stifling in the frosty air, a delicious savour of broiling

rejoiced the family, with mouths full of food they lost themselves in an oblivion of gluttony.

The fire ate itself into strength and held the wood in a ravenous embrace with all its devouring limbs, covered its prey with its whole wild ghostly body, which stretched up and leaped freely into the air, had young, vanished and came again. The wood seethed and gave loud cracks, and the flames breathed fiercely, roared and rolled out smoke which sailed up high and made a cloud. What a marvel! But the greatest marvel was that the fire warmed, it warmed! It was hotter than the summer day and nearer than the great sun. Carl saw his children laugh at the fire with new happy looks on their pauper's faces, he saw them stretch out their hands to receive the warmth, making a caress in return because it was so good. And he saw them draw back in terror when they came too near it, and then he gave a mighty laugh; they would learn soon enough the boundary between what was good and what was dangerous. Mam looked on, her wrinkled face with its young eyes lighted up by the joy-fire; she had brought out her basket-work which the great event had made her drop, and worked on to finish it.

In the evening they had light in the cave! A fire on the floor showed them for the first time the interior of a home in which they had always been accustomed to fumble about with their hands. The family on the icefield had entered upon a new era.

Carl examined the wonderful stone which had given fire on striking flint and could go on giving it. It was a dazzling yellow and glistened when turned in the light, heavy in the hand, and it smelt like raw onion when broken. He ought to have been able to *see* that this was the very fire stone. Never had Carl felt anything lie so weightily and richly in his hand as this stone. It bred a wholly new joy of possession, roused a mighty desire and satisfied it at the same time, since he had it. It gave him unbounded

power, it was the first treasure of his race and of mankind. He had not only recovered fire, but if it went out he could *at any time get it again!* The men of the bush could not do that, they only had their hearth, from which all fire had to be taken and laboriously carried about smouldering in a basket of tinder when they moved. If it went out it could not be kindled again. They had not the spark. Here it was. And Carl determined to construct a special little chamber of the biggest boulders he could move as a hiding place for his fire stone.

But when night came and all the others were asleep in the cave, full-fed and resting deeply after all the warmth they had got in their bodies, Carl could not sleep. The day's great find possessed him like a fever in the blood, joy and excitement ran tingling through his limbs, he looked about him as he lay with a supernaturally wakeful eye; it was as though the tension had waited until now, when he had reached the goal through long years of hopeless toil. The fire smouldered without giving any light, smothered in a hole in the floor and well covered over with ashes. Above the little opening he had made for the smoke between the stones of the roof, a star appeared, quite small and intimate.

The low, heavy-walled hole in the ground where Carl lay with all that was his was filled with the smell of the fire and the burnt wood, which had sweated out its summer soul, and Carl thought himself back in the forest, in the pregnant atmosphere of fertility among dewy, resin-dripping palms. A dazzling sunshine kept passing before his eyes and he imagined he was flying, soaring freely in an ocean of mild sweetness above dizzy tree-tops. Did he see peacocks, was he himself a peacock, radiant with the colours of the rainbow, flying over the forest in the mist of sunlight with his train of mystic eyes? Had he returned to his childhood, were the warm forests again swaying upon earth, and was it only an evil dream that the ice-sheet

lay over the lost country to the height of its tallest trees?

The familiar nocturnal sound reached his ears, the deep subterranean grinding of the ice on the rock as it crept on, the fall of blocks of ice and the sweep of the north wind in the bare green fissures—or was it the rush of the warm rain in the jungle's foliage he heard, the languid sighing and groaning of the lofty trees? The blood boiled in his ears, he scarcely knew what was the sound and what was himself. Spasms of joy shot through his breast when he came to think of his treasure, he grew so happy that he saw suns before his eyes and lost all sense of time. He did not know himself; what was the truth? Was it he who for endless ages had stood up more and more fiercely against winter, while he saw his children freezing, freezing, without being able to give them warmth, until his heart became like the flint he broke? . . if the whole earth turned to stone, he would strike fire from it! Was it he who had now found fire? Oh, his heart had come back again, hot, choking hot springs in his breast. . . .

He lay with the fire stone beside him and thought it an eternity since he had tried it; he longed to see the sparks spurt from it again. The blood raged through his veins like a world on fire. He must see fire, calm his heart with the wealth he had made tangible. And he sat up with swimming head, held the stone and a piece of flint before him in the dark, and struck fire.

A great blue spark sprang from the stone, blue as the wildest lightning and of immense power; it lit up a world before Carl's eye. *Now*—

He is not in the cave but in the open, and round about him flickers a green element, in which all that he sees swims away and loses itself; high above his head there seems to be a roof, rocking in lively motion, which refracts the light with dazzling clearness, and he understands that he is in water, deep down where the water closes warm and heavy about his body and runs along his sides with

light tickling bubbles. His field of view, which is narrow and blurred, moves with him as he glides on, and he sees other creatures in motion, great armoured predatory fish, which come towards him and instantly turn aside with an oblique stroke of their tail fin; transparent hag-fish vanish in rapid twirls among the sea palms. The bottom, which looks much nearer than it is in the clear water, is like a flowery meadow of open quivering coral polyps, and the glutinous bodies grope about with feelers that are studded all over with eyes and suckers, twisting in and out, up and down in the deep water, which warps the sight so that it is impossible to tell where the polyp is or whether it is only the lobes of one of the long, gently swaying marine plants which rise from the bottom surrounded by crustaceans and with small creeping slimy bodies on their stalks. The deep is covered with whole gloomy groves of plants with leaves or fingers, intersected by green glades, and here glide all kinds of flame-yellow and sky-blue fish which gape over the warm water and expel it again from their gills, as they turn their flat, glazed eyes and look about them. Little fibrous underhung sea-horses sit in the weeds, made fast by their prehensile tails, and let the world go by; their dorsal fin stands set like a little sail, making delicate play in the current.

As Carl glides slowly on it dawns on him that it is himself whose shadow is cast over the wilderness of seaweed wherever he goes, and who sets up a swell that makes the submarine forest rock; he is something or other big and feared, since all the fish, even the most dangerous-looking, make way for him; there is always an empty space of a certain befitting range around him, and there must be a reason for this. He goes over various deep-water passes, where in the brooding darkness of the ocean floor he glimpses the tails of fat mud eels making for safety; he skims over low coral reefs, where he chases whole shoals of glittering fry in headlong flight before him; finally he

approaches the dazzling, glimmering roof—and breaks through it. He goes up on to a mud bank among the roots of a tree and is now on the outskirts of a great forest on land, in a damp and resinous atmosphere.

The sky above him is perfectly white with warm steam and appears to rest on the tops of the wide-spreading giant ferns which, interspersed with towering horsetails and lycopodiums, dominate the forest. Gigantic insects fly among the tops of the tree-ferns, prodigious flies, bugs and dragonflies of supernatural size, whose sheeny wings click and rustle audibly up and down. But on the reeking forest floor, which is matted together with mangroves and black fallen trunks, the swamp is almost boiling with the heat of fermentation and here sit great bloated mud toads with witless eyes, making attempts to hop when one of the giant insects comes near. The half rotten tree-trunks are twined round with strange snaky parasites and bushes which seem alive and feel about with fleshy and glandular follicles in the moist air. Tadpoles and snails swim about among the ground shoots of the horsetails, where the sap sweats out in sulphurous pools. The black mud among the roots of the trees is full of holes where crabs lurk, and fish run over it, with movable eyes and fins that serve as feet. All around the hot mud swells and bursts in bubbles.

But there is no sun; in its place a luminous fog over the landscape. From time to time a hotter shudder seems to shoot through the fog, making the sky whiter but not more transparent; this is lightning not far away, followed by muffled thunder. In the south above the misty fern forest a round mother-of-pearl gleam shows in the sky; this is the sun, which never penetrates the steamy atmosphere.

And between the aerial roots of a tree on a mud island near him Carl sees a being which he knows to be his like, a great flesh-coloured scaly salamander with human eyes. It is sitting with its finned tail in the water, opening and

shutting long fish jaws of rapacious teeth; it is engaged in devouring a salamander of the same kind as itself, though somewhat smaller. Round about it all other animals respectfully make way. Yes, that is what he looks like, Carl knows very well, and he can feel his salamander soul, a sort of giddy unconsciousness, in which he perceives everything with all his pores and yet knows nothing. At that instant the spark goes out and he is sitting in the dark in his cave on the ice-sheet.

Carl sighed, he knew that he had had a vision but could not remember it. He listened to the children's breathing, they were all sleeping securely in the warm cave. Overhead the frosty wind passed through the night with a lonely sound. A distant cough came from the icefield, where the ice broke asunder in a crevasse. An anguished feeling came over Carl that time was flying past. He would have to strike fire again, only once more. And he struck fire. A long dripping, yellowish blue spark flew from the stone. *Now—*

In that flash it is as though Carl's soul expands so mightily that he knows and is part of all the light reveals, though it is a world incomprehensible to him. It is night and winter, but everywhere is a blaze of light and thousands of human beings pass close beside him. Well yes—he is on a street corner in Chicago, and the magic spark drips from the overhead wires of the trolley-cars. Unbroken lines of street-cars, lighted up and packed full, glide along the street, which is black with a swarm of people, and above them the elevated railroad thunders past illuminating house-fronts. It is snowing, but the city is alive with people on foot and in vehicles, endless trains, steaming locomotives. The city raises its towering houses in miles of cliffs like a glowing forest of iron and stone, and mingles its fiery air and pungent sulphurous smoke with the fine frosty snow of the winter night. Thousands of people, strangers and hostile to each other, crowd among the lofty

business houses, which overhang the abyss of the street with their façades as bright as day, lights and lights running up perpendicularly from the ground till the shining columns of windows lose themselves in the smoke and darkness of the wintry sky. In the middle of the sidewalk a long stretch of pavement receives the thick-falling snow with a subdued facetted glare which finds its way up from below through thick glass prisms, and this glare of light throbs with a rapid pulse; it is the shadow of the spokes of a great fly-wheel down below that makes the light vibrate, the pulse of an engine fed by a coal fire underneath the houses, the beat of the heart of light which sends out the artificial day into the city through copper veins under the ice-cold pavements of the street. The arc-lights over the heads of the busy human crowd burn almost imperceptibly with the same rhythm. This is the *Wheel*, this is the fern forest's marvellous second blooming.

Carl gave a sudden start, from cold and from energy. The spark went out and he was left in the dark with the fire stone in his powerful hands. He had been wondrously staggered and found himself in a painful and ecstatic uncertainty about the world and about himself which he could not bear. He struck fire again.

But now it was half a century later and Carl was an old, old man. His descendants, who dwelt with him on the ice-sheet, had become quite a little nation, all with his and Mam's features blended together, a strong and hardy breed. Mam was no more, but there was no danger of her habits dying out, the race carried them on. Yes, Carl had grown old, his soul had play only within quite narrow limits in his shrunken and ossified body. Time . . . one day he felt longings and went down into the chamber he had built for his fire stone and for it alone and where none dared follow him. He closed the grave after him with a heavy stone, and his sons and sons' sons, who stood around in deepest awe, heard the Ancient turning about and blowing

like a bear preparing to hibernate. Afterwards they heard him humming underground, and he sang:

Early the storms of life
taught me simplicity;
the house beneath the ground
for the weary is fittest.

That day passed and the night too, but Carl did not come out, nor did any one dare to intrude on him. But they herad him sing:

Once I plucked breadfruit
where icebergs are crashing.
Late will men long for
the land I saw sinking.

Even on the third day they heard feeble tones from the grave. Carl sang:

I yearn for the shoreless
sea of my boyhood.
Memory consoles me.
Mam, shall we meet there?

They saw a flash of fire from the grave and started back in terror. Not till weeks after did Carl's sons pluck up courage to cover the barrow with earth where the Ancient had gone below.

But the flash they saw was when Carl, after being lost in thought three days and nights, had at last felt in the dark for the fire stone with his numbed old man's hands and struck fire. *Now—*

A flood of unearthly light about him! He is in the midst of the Forest of the Living. The soil is of skin with coarse pores, here and there overgrown with hair and in places hardened to black-and-white striped horn. Hills and the long folds of valleys show where the earth's bones protrude and where miles of ribs run, and the plains are strewed with blocks of old blanched bone. The gravel at the edge of a blood swamp is made of washed up human teeth, and out of the swamp grow tufts of fingers, from

tender little baby's fingers not yet opened to strong, fully extended men's hands.' 'But the forest, which grows thick and runs so far into the distance that at last it is only seen as a pink haze, consists of naked trees with branching limbs and eyes fixed in the trunks; the foliage is long, hanging human hair. The trees are not all alike, some are quite red and white in the bark, so that the blue veins show through; they have greenish eyes and luxuriant red foliage; others are more brownish in the bark with dark eyes and black tops, but the forest is so infinitely great that the difference is not very noticeable.

The forest has the effect of a mass, and yet the trees are not all of the same sex or age. There are male trees with knotty branches and protruding paunches, and slender, nervous girl trees with all their wealth of hair hanging in a tremble over their limbs like birches in springtime. Little children are shooting up in the undergrowth, with only their round heads yet visible as they break through the soil.

Some of the trees are old, with perfectly white, scanty hair bristling from their withered tops, and their stems bent and full of wrinkles; and there are tender infantile trees with milky skin and light down on their chubby twigs.

Each tree becomes one with the soil through its horny roots, but otherwise has most of its organs independently; besides its eyes there are one or more ears on the stem, a mouth opens among the branches, and nostrils are spread about over the tree. But they have their breath in common, the whole forest breathes together with a sound like one great fever, and from underground up through all the trees right out to the farthest twig a single common pulse can be felt, the beat of which can be traced in the landscape all the time as a measured, almost imperceptible up and down; the vast common heart beats far down in the very centre of the earth. The atmosphere too is common, the whole forest smells of sweat.

The forest extends, flesh-coloured and boundless, as far as the eye can see, and the air is so clear that it ranges for hundreds of leagues. In some places, far and near, it is flecked by shadows, and these shadows seem to be of a definite oval form and to move slowly over the landscape. Carl, who is sitting in the forest as an old gnarled stump with one dim eye, turns his gaze upward, trying to see where the shadows come from, and notices several perfectly flat, gigantic flounder-like creatures floating up in space against the red sky. One is quite near and lies above the forest, a great oval miles long, immensely high up. What it is he cannot see, but it is in gliding movement, and all the way along its edge, which is thin and translucent, runs a quivering, regular wavy motion from front to rear, like the fins of a flounder, and this is continually repeated. The vast size of these flying ovals makes the forest and everything on earth seem low and small. But the red light in the sky above the flying things draws the eye higher, and soon even they are forgotten like motes in the air, for the vault of heaven ranges away into infinite space.

The universe is of a glorious colour like the flush of dawn, the very source from which all feeble myths of the joy of life are derived. A sun lies quite near but does not dazzle the eye, so that he can see the wonderful gaseous body resting in its prolific spherical being, expanding and contracting, rarer than air and yet tense, like a swarm of bees in the free summer air; round about it hang many planets in their happy orbits, and in the background a host of constellations proclaim that untold suns are circling each for itself, solitary but in freedom after the same blest laws of flight. Blue and yellow spheres hang quite near, so that the lines of their continents can be described. Milky Ways lying billions of miles away swim like fine clouds in the universe.

But above them all and centred in the zenith swings a nebula whose immense shining spiral seems to form a

wheel, covering almost a quarter of the heavens. It stands perpetually above the Forest of the Living as a sign of the everlasting centrifugal force in eternity. . . .

The spark went out, and Carl lay alone in darkness—in darkness. The grave closed him in well. It was narrow and poor as the very first stone cists he had made when, naked and alone, he was thrust out into the winter.

Ages passed, and still he could see. There was a hole between the stones, and through it he saw a little piece of the starry sky, and it was his last deep joy that he lay beneath the familiar constellation of his childhood in his own black earth.

It was the Pleiades that shone down upon him, the Pleiades that twinkled mistily, showed all their starry eyes and hung again bedewed in their eternity.

## XI

### THE SONS OF CARL

THE people of the North increased. As the ice-sheet grew, Carl's and Mam's offspring multiplied into a number of families and clans, which spread themselves over the mountain isle and carried on the life of their ancestors.

At first the Ice Folk drew new blood from their original kinsmen of the forests. Carl's sons made raids among the Forest Folk to the south and brought back women; their sons did likewise, and it long remained the custom for the young men of the icefield on reaching maturity to prove their manhood by going down to the forests to get wives. These raids always took place in springtime and were surrounded by a certain festal humour, of which the younger men dreamed and the old retained grateful memories. For besides the bringing home of fresh woolly girls these expeditions provided an opportunity for making the acquaintance of the young bride's relatives, with a welcome change of diet; merry tales were told of rapes of women followed by banquets where excitement reached such a pitch that the bride was included in the meal, so that to avoid returning empty-handed the whole raid had to be started over again. One was apt to let one's self go in foreign parts.

But these jungle girls, when once the young men had brought them back to the ice-sheet, were thought a good deal of, partly on account of their scarcity, partly because they soon gained respect as prolific mothers; and the half

spontaneous grimace with which their husbands approached them, as though they simply intended to eat them up, came to be regarded as the sign of affection and pride of possession.

The distance, however, became greater and greater as the ice-sheet spread, and it might take whole years to visit the natives of the southern jungles and come home again with women. Another reason for the discontinuance of the practice was that in time the Ice Folk became so numerous that the younger members of different families, though distantly related, were sufficiently strangers to one another to be struck with the mutual surprise which brings young people together. Everything has its day, and the woman hunts in spring became in their turn things of the past. Carl's posterity and his original kinsfolk were already two widely different types. Legends more and more romantic were told of the lovely dusky daughters of the jungle, but the few specimens it was still possible to procure in the flesh smelt of civet and were not to the taste of the Icemen. A dream that makes your mouth water is one thing, the unappetising reality another. And when at last distance and time had entirely sundered the two races, any propensity for savage women came to be regarded as indecent; while on the other hand the luxurious dreams to which this privation gave rise took on ever lovelier forms and were bound to end in creating an ideal of Beauty as a world in itself.

Thus the gulf between the two races parted by the Ice became a profound eternal chasm. They were no longer each other's like. The division between them was fateful in its effect. The primitive people who continually gave ground remained the same, whereas Carl, who could not yield, had become another and had passed on his changed nature as a heritage to his descendants. The Jungle Folk continued to give way before the winters, went farther and farther south that they might still live the same life, and

this retreat, coupled with their continual increase, was destined to lead them into distant climates and to spread them over all continents. But Carl's race remained settled in the North and adjusted itself to ever more difficult conditions, which necessitated progress at home. They no longer resembled the naked and forgetful savages from whom they were originally descended, they were other men.

The sons of Carl grew big and strong as bears in their toilsome hunters' life on the ice-sheet. The clothes they wore made their own coat of hair superfluous, their skins became red and white from living in the shade. The everlasting wet weather bleached their hair, and their massive-browed eyes, which once had been dark as the confines of the forest, took their colour from the crevasses of the glacier and from the open, blue-green blink of the horizon between ice and sky.

And their nature was different from that of their remote forefathers; they had lost the forest man's way of going slap-dash at a thing and then stopping to scratch himself; their life had taught them to take good thought and strike home when the time came. They did not live exclusively in the moment, the eternal summer of the jungle; they had to remember and think ahead if they were to survive the seasons. In place of the passion, harmless enough, of primitive man, they had assumed a self-command which might have an air of coldness; the wider range of their activities compelled them to think twice and hesitate. This made them introspective and apparently joyless; there was no sound of chirruping about their dwellings as in the leafy booths of the forest. But impulsiveness and joy of life lay deep in their nature and had acquired added strength. In this they all took after Carl, whose lifelong calm was legendary, but of whom it was also related that on two or three occasions he had used his primitive strength with all the violence of rage. It was said that none had seen Carl laugh, and yet there was proof that he enjoyed

existence more hugely than any one alive; and then he was immortal. The One-Eyed Ancient was regarded by the Ice Folk with a reverence more and more obscure; every tradition of him was sacred. From him all was derived.

The life that was led on the mountain isle for more generations than any could survey, extending over many thousands of years, was just like that of the first parents, Carl and Mam, and the end of it was that things *had* to be so.

The men fashioned weapons and lived by hunting. Here the only change was that the game grew steadily scarcer and had to be sought farther and farther away; on the other hand every family took to keeping tame reindeer, which were slaughtered when the hunting failed. The chief game was the mammoth, with whom the Ice Folk had broken truce from time immemorial, taking him in pits and bringing him down with the harpoon. Unfortunately there were but few of them and they had to be looked for on distant islands, often after long journeys across the ice.

Therefore it was reckoned a great event, and there was general excitement and blowing of mammoth-tusks all over the island, when the hunters returned after long absence and reported a kill. The signal concerned the whole island, but in particular a certain family circle, that of the lucky hunter who had first tracked down the mammoth. Then the whole settlement was on the move, all that had legs to carry them set off across the ice to the spot where the fallen giant lay. They took fire with them and skins for tents, and a regular camp sprang up around the mammoth, where men wallowed in huge banquets of flesh and ended by eating themselves out of their senses. The happy Icemen swarming about the mammoth looked like slaughtered things themselves, all blood from top to toe; they threw off their skins and went headlong, naked as they were born, into the monster's smoking entrails, each with a freshly struck knife, still smelling of lightning; the

women tucked up their clothes till they hung in a ring round their necks and a busy hum came from them as they scurried to and fro between the carcass and the fires. Unspeakable things happened, *everything* was allowed at a mammoth feast.

The banquet was opened with the mammoth's warm paunch, which was full of half digested food, whole stacks of larch needles, moss, thyme, bark and berries, all stewed and mingled with gastric juice into a dainty broth which went right into the thirsting veins of the meat-eaters, who were not used to vegetables. This food had been the favourite of the One-Eyed in his old age; he used to say it reminded him of his youth in the sulphurous jungles. A good part of the belly with its contents was set aside at every mammoth feast for an offering on Carl's burial mound on the return home. Old hunters told stories that they had heard from their forefathers, handed down by ancestors still farther back, of the One-Eyed's taste for mammoth paunch. The legend added, as a most singular thing, that in the days of Carl and his sons and grandsons the Ice Folk were no more numerous than that one mammoth was just sufficient to feed the whole of them with their households at one time. So long ago was it. Now, if all the Ice Folk were assembled in one place, there was nothing to prevent them eating up as many mammoths as there were fingers on a man's hand, even with all his toes thrown in.

Song and story, bygone days and their destinies lived again at the great mammoth feasts, when tongues were loosened in the intoxication of meat and frightful nightmares fostered the wildest visions. Long and thrilling tales were told and retold of this or that mammoth that had gone mad and trampled its pursuers to death—an unkind mammoth that grudged hungry folk the least morsel. When the teller was quite full, so full that the last mouthful stuck in his throat, greasing his speech, he would in-

variably fall to romancing about the supernatural mammoth, which had been seen by every man's grandfather, or indeed by himself one winter night on the icefield, especially after eating kidney; an immense old male with tusks towering right up into the northern lights and a coat white as the snowstorm with age; Father Mammoth himself, the sign of famine. If any one had latent bardic gifts the mammoth feast was sure to bring them out, and many a good lay, with a taste of the fat of the fire, the smell of roast on the icefield and the twinkling stars overhead, passed in later days from mouth to mouth.

The tribe never slaughtered a mammoth without making use literally of every scrap of the beast. The meat left over from the feast was cut into strips, brought home and smoked. The wool was used for clothes and for lining the huts; bones, guts and sinews all had their uses, and nothing was wasted. And when all was collected and carried home, the sharing began. This was perhaps the most elaborate business of all, since everybody on the island had a claim to some part of the beast, greater or less according to certain fixed customs. The Ice Folk had always shared, ever since Carl the Old himself presided at the slaughter and saw to it that all had equal portions. So it had been since his time, only it had become difficult in practice, because the Ice Folk had grown so numerous as to make direct sharing impossible; it had to be done in proportion. Definite traditional laws, which were never set aside, existed for the sharing, but the increase of the tribes compelled new interpretations of the law, which soon became so involved that few could make head or tail of them. First the lucky hunter who had marked down the game had to have his share, and he got one of the tusks, of which he made a grand horn or a set of splendid harpoons. The other tusk fell to the One-Eyed and was offered upon his grave together with mammoth paunch and other good things. The flesh and the rest of the animal was divided

according to strict rules, so that the clan to whose lot the slaying had fallen got most, while the rest was portioned out according to degrees of relationship until every single family on the island had a share of the quarry, however small. Specially favoured, of course, was the Garm Clan, which was descended from Carl's firstborn and had the right of receiving offerings to the One-Eyed. A single mammoth, though soon eaten up, might well keep one family employed for several years and the whole island for the best part of a winter, so much hair was there to plait and so much gut and sinew to twine. Strange how much there could be inside a beast which, however huge, looked at a distance no bigger than a midge on the ice-field.

Besides the great northern elephant the men hunted the woolly-haired rhinoceros, reindeer and musk-ox, the polar bear and many smaller animals, such as foxes and hares, which lived on the rocky islets or roamed about the ice between them. In their hunting the Ice Folk were accompanied by the dog, who since Carl's time had multiplied through many tame generations and now took up a very hostile attitude towards his former wild kin, which kept company with the wolves and had become merged in them. At home the dog was also useful for guarding the herds of reindeer and keeping them from running away from the island.

But as with their hunting and making of weapons, so with the rest of their life; it was just the same as in the days of their ancestor Carl, and yet innumerable generations had gone by. Their houses were the same pits in the earth, protected by big overlapping boulders; their clothes were the same hides, chewed and tanned with fat and held together in the good old way with thongs of reindeer skin. Any change was unthinkable, for the whole order of things was just what had been instituted by Carl and nothing else was known to the Ice Folk. His ways

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were good enough for his children and they were binding for all men of his blood.

There was but one circumstance which the Father in his time could scarcely have conceived: that their numbers on the mountain isle should become so great. Wide indeed it was, many days' journey in every direction, but still in course of time there came to be too many of them. And more kept coming, children swarmed up out of the ground, they simply teemed in the settlements like flies on the offal-heap. When the children of several families joined together they formed regular hordes who tore around over the island and almost made it dangerous for grown-up people to go about singly. They wanted food, and when there was a whole pack of them together they let one understand with a grin that they were not particular *what* they got. If it chanced that a youngster of one's own was in the crowd and cheerfully showed his teeth at his progenitor, pretending not to know him, it was enough to make a man feel quite sad.

But there were other difficulties besides that of feeding too many mouths. Supplies were not equally divided, and this precisely because all in the island were equal. Their communal system prevented the individual from developing freely. This and certain aspects of their domestic life—regard for their ancestor's memory—began to be felt as a constraint by the Ice Folk. Carl's laws, which were originally intended for the protection of all, threatened to check the growth of each individual and thereby that of the whole little community on the island. It is true that the worship of Allfather, which little by little had been reduced to a system, united the Ice Folk into a whole, but at the same time it prevented their expanding. Carl's grave formed a centre for all interests, and this could not be otherwise. But a growing injustice lay in the fact that the common worship remained by a natural privilege in the hands of a certain line which

traced back to Carl's firstborn, Garm. This clan guarded Carl's grave and received offerings made to him.

It never occurred to any one to believe that the One-Eyed, the Father of all, could be dead. For he had never been killed, nor had he met his death by mischance like other men, but had gone down into his house when it suited him and had stayed there ever since. Many would assert that they had seen him, generations later, and there were still some who at times saw fire issuing from the mound. The Ancient was certainly alive and must of course have food, the best of the hunting spoils was not too good for him. That the seed of Garm, who guarded the Grave, should receive the offerings and more or less openly regale themselves on the victuals, was regarded as only natural; for what went to one's family went to one's self. Nor did any man feel wronged at parting with half his kill. But in the latter days the hunter was left with scarcely a tithe for himself. He was practically hunting for others. And the descendants of Garm tried to extend their influence in other matters, not concerned with the division of the spoil, and maintained their position through the awe that surrounded the Grave. They had the power. Theirs was the fire and its source.

Naturally every family had its fire, which was safeguarded and kept alive with the greatest care; in hard times, even if it should cost the last scrap of tallow, the fire could not be let out. But if that did happen there was no help for it but to fetch a brand from the ancient pyre which the Allfather himself had kindled and which was in the possession of the Sons of Garm. That they did not part with fire without ample remuneration or obligations of other kinds, went without saying; the Garm Clan developed a subtle discrimination to their own advantage which lost nothing by being handed down from father to son. Besides the sacred pyre they owned the

Fire Stone itself, so they had enough and to spare. Their fire was always assured, even if the pyre should be quenched; they knew the secret of fire. Dark hints were whispered that the One-Eyed had communicated the art to his eldest son Garm with injunctions to initiate the whole people in it, and that Garm had then thought good to keep it to himself; others asserted that Carl had taken the Fire Stone with him into the grave so that no one should have it, whereupon Garm had desecrated the tomb and taken it. However this might be, it was known that the wonderful stone was in the possession of the Garm Clan. It descended from father to son in the direct line, and nobody had ever seen it except the eldest of each generation. There was no supernatural power that was not attributed to it. For that matter it had never been used for renewing the pyre, which had burnt continually since the days of Carl.

The Ice Folk willingly submitted to the Garm Clan out of respect for their common Father. But the effect of this Allfather worship was that all traditions preserved among the clans of the life and customs of the One-Eyed became fixed as the canon for all time, and the Garmings supported this view with all their might. Nothing was permitted unless it had a precedent in tradition, unless it could be said that so had the Ancient acted. All the first simple ways, which in their day had only originated from necessity, though by the hand of Carl, acquired a deeper significance and were followed to the exclusion of any new departure which might have had a liberating effect. The result was a cramping of daily life, in which men hardly dared to move for pious scruples. By degrees the individual hunter lost his taste for sport. But there was no way out of what all regarded as a necessity; for it was not to be imagined that any man should refuse the Allfather's Grave the reverence which was only the natural expression of his own heart. With this view the members

of the Garm Clan entirely agreed, and they strengthened themselves in the maintenance of piety by diligently feeding on all the mammoth paunches the people offered before the One-Eyed.

Thus matters stood, and thus they continued as long as the ice-sheet advanced, and that was a long time. Strange luminaries with tails paid visits to the sky and cleared off again, leaving a mystic dread in the minds of men. Generation succeeded generation, the offal-heaps by the settlements grew with one layer of bones and ashes above another. Men who remembered their own early childhood as a yesterday saw their little children grow up and knew that with *their* children it would be the same. And still the Ice Folk shaped their axes and set up their stone huts in the ground exactly as an obscure but inviolable tradition told them the Allfather had done and not otherwise. Their minds were shut up in the grey gloom of a monotonous life, while time and the ages passed.

Round about the mountain isle the ice-sheet spoke as it had spoken for thousands of years, with a dull booming and settling in the caverns under the ice, with a muffled scraping against the rock and a subterranean gushing of water; but no one heard it, the sound was old and had become one with their ears.

With the men of the icefield it had come to this, that they were bound and did not even know it. But while they were entirely absorbed in their hunting and in their voluntary bondage, many improvements, strangely enough, were brought in on the part of the women, unnoticeably, of their own accord. It never occurred to any one to give them a share in the men's body politic; they were outside its constraints and in that respect had full liberty. Not that the women were without their own little ways; perhaps they were even more inviolable than the men's, because it was habit and not themselves that had created them. But there was a certain dewy and sisterly forget-

fulness inherent in the sex, closely akin to the southerners' jungle nature, which day by day allowed a lot of things to pass unseen by open eyes. Nothing is so unwomanly as to be different from others, and at times this may make a positive crime of any resistance to a novelty.

As far as their daily life was concerned, the women had inherited Mam's habits and faithfully busied themselves with all kinds of plaiting work, with gathering supplies and of course first and last with their little ones. They were carried on the back, you may be sure, even at home in the hut and in spite of the fact that nobody ever travelled nowadays, for that had been Mam's way. In summer there was a gathering of corn and anything else fit to eat that grew on the island, and in winter they twined yarn and plaited clothes; all this was as old as the hills.

But now the women made pots of clay and baked them in the fire. Had Mam done so? Perhaps, and perhaps not. The women had smeared the insides of their baskets with clay for so long that at last one which was hung up to dry over the fire got burnt, leaving nothing but the clay; that was the first pot. It was due to a piece of carelessness. The whole sex had a share in it. It was charming. Later on some enterprising young person must have thought she wouldn't be bothered to shape her pot in the basket first, but made it straight in the clay; a rash thing to do, but it held!—The sex copied her, and now all pottery was made in that way.

But the fired pots led to an important change of diet, since the women got into the way of boiling the food instead of toasting it in the fire as before. But they had not got so far as setting the pot on the fire; they put red-hot stones into it until the meat was done.

The women, hot and greasy, bustled about the hearth with a will during the long days when the men were out hunting. Everything had to be tried, browned, smelt, and poured in and out of pots, then tasted and mixed over

again. Sheer inquisitiveness and leisure taught them to bake bread, for they wanted to try scorching and warming all their good things before letting their teeth deal with them; they roasted barleycorns on a sherd, for that made them sweet; they bruised the grain between two stones and dashed water or milk on it before baking and made the most delicious cakes—which the children busily copied in the mud outside—and as the men also took a fancy to these loaves, they became a standing dish, so long as corn was to be had. Baked on the hot hearthstones and seasoned with ashes, which gave a salt taste, they were a favourite addition to the meal, especially in winter, when there were no fresh herbs to be had.

Otherwise everything went into the clay pot, roots and bulbs, meat and tallow; the soup was thinned with water and warmed with hot stones, which besides seething the meat gave it a flavour by adding charcoal and ash. When one of these red-hot stones, which shone in the cave like a little sun, all set in sparks and stars, was dropped into the pot and scalded the water till the vessel rocked and the steam rose thick into the roof, anybody could see plainly enough that an evil spirit was being driven out of the water by the power of fire; it rolled about with ugly growls and you had to hold on to the pot to keep it from capsizing. True, it had never been reported that Mam knew of boiling in her time, though who could tell? What was done now must have been done always. Boiling had come to stay.

When the women were not at their dainty arts by the fire they wove themselves clothes, each finer and more extravagant than the last, but always in the strictest conformity with the general taste. One century it was absolutely necessary to wear nothing but a polar bear's skin which had to be open all down the front; the polar bears were almost exterminated and the women never went out, because the fashion was such a chilly one; but what

were they to do? What made it indispensable to dress in this particular way was that nobody on any account might have the smallest glimpse of a woman's back. A later and more sober age found it difficult to understand that people of the olden time could be such unfortunate victims of a one-sided modesty.

Naturally the women of the icefield were always collecting things for their adornment. A necklace of wolves' teeth bored through and strung was very effective in setting off a frail creature who was only a woman. A bone stuck through the cartilage of the nose was one of those ornaments that were within the reach of all and therefore went out of fashion comparatively quickly. A great deal was thought of a fine complexion, which the women tried to achieve by treating their skin with ochre, obtained from the springs on the island. This blooming tint soon spread from the face over the whole body, and here it must be said that the men caught the fashion; they too loved to smear themselves with ochre and fat till they looked like fiery red men and could be seen a long way off in their glory.

But besides these improvements of their personal appearance the women had introduced a custom unknown to Mam the Old, a custom the trace of which was lost in the past, no one ever giving its origin a thought; they milked the half tame reindeer and used the milk in their housekeeping. Perhaps some pretty little sad story lay behind it, inarticulate as a mother's heart, the story of a woman who had had no milk to give her babe and had taken it from the reindeer which grazed about the settlement and were kept for winter slaughtering. Since then people had themselves acquired a taste for reindeer's milk. Now there were always pots of fresh or curdled milk standing in their storerooms and many reindeer were allowed to live on this account. This custom was afterwards to be carried further.

Taking it all in all the people of the icefield were fairly contented and led an honest, simple existence. But the continual increase of the population was pressing upon them, and they made no advance. Perhaps the Northerners might have remained for ever in this stage as a poor and upright race of hunters, cramped and shut in by sterile retrospect, if the solid ring within which their existence had stiffened had not itself served at last to exclude another individual, as it had once excluded Carl; a new outcast and liberator, who against their will led his people on beyond themselves.

And at the same time a fundamental change came over the conditions of their life on the icefield—the icefield which for all time decided the fate of men.

## XII

## THE UNICORN

THERE was a man called White Bear who was not born of the race of the Sons of Garm.

Early in life he heard of injustice and oppression from that quarter. White Bear's father used to sit at home in his cave with his back against the farthest corner and move his lips with every sign of curses seething within him; this was when the Garmings had offered him an insult which lay like glowing stones about his heart; but no sound came from him, he swallowed his wrath. White Bear's father was a great hunter who every year brought a heap of mammoth tusks and other spoils of the chase in tribute to Firegrim, now chief of the Garm Clan.

White Bear's father was very strong, and Firegrim was a weakling, who never dragged his bloated limbs farther than from the storehouses to his sleeping-place. White Bear marvelled as a child to see the two together and hear Firegrim give orders to his father, whose chest was on a level with his head. When White Bear ranged about the island in a pack with the other children and their boyish appetite made them bold, the talk was always of when they would be big and eat Firegrim, and their mouths watered as they said it, but they shuddered all the time; for Firegrim had the sacred stone which killed people and returned to his hand itself, my word!

Afterwards, when White Bear grew up and became a hunter, he learned to reverence the Allfather and was initiated at the Grave, taking the oath to offer the greater part of his spoil to the Garmings. On that occasion

Firegrim gave White Bear to understand, as others before him, that his zeal in sacrificing would stand him in good stead when presently Allfather came and took all his people with him home to the rich country he knew of. Oh yes, White Bear knew all about the beautiful summer land which had been lost and which Firegrim said was to come again, but he never gave it much thought; the ice-field was good enough for him. As for the sacrifice, White Bear made up for it by taking ten times the quantity of game. He became a mighty hunter and was the cheeriest man on the island, full of song, never on bad terms with any man, not even with Firegrim.

But White Bear cast his eyes upon a girl, and then there was an end of peace. The custom was that, when young people wished to be united and have their own home, they were to be blessed at Allfather's Grave and to receive fire for their hearth from the sacred pyre. All other fire was forbidden as unclean. No decent person objected to following the custom, and there were only decent people on the mountain isle. But the consecration cost a good deal and was binding for life; moreover it rested with Firegrim the priest whether he would allow the union at all. In White Bear's case he forbade it. Firegrim had never looked upon White Bear's family with favour, and he secretly desired the girl for himself. Her name was May and she was lovely.

Now it was not to be expected of Firegrim that he would refuse pointblank and no more to be said, that was not the way of Firegrim the Priest. White Bear got his refusal in the cautious form that May should be his on the day when he laid the Unicorn's horn on Allfather's grave mound; but that was of course impossible.

White Bear smiled. He went out upon the icefield and was away a year, and when he came back he had laid the monster low. It was the greatest exploit that had ever been achieved by a man of the Ice, no one had believed

it could be done. Only Carl the Old was thought to have possessed strength and courage enough for what White Bear had accomplished. He was called the Unicorn-slayer and was celebrated in song and story.

He himself made a picture of the whole hunt on the blade of his spear in everlasting remembrance. First you saw a long stroke with four strokes under it and a slanting stroke above, that was the Unicorn. Then you saw one stroke with another across it, that was White Bear himself with his harpoon; all the rest, the fight and the end of the Unicorn, was obvious.

Now the animal was of the rhinoceros tribe. Not the ordinary woolly-haired and cross-tempered rhinoceros which followed the tracks of the mammoth and was often brought down by the Ice Folk. That one was wrathful and dangerous enough and a big lump of a beast to have to deal with, but nothing to the Unicorn.

This beast, which was of a kind by itself, had only one horn and was nearly three times as big as an ordinary rhinoceros. It was longer in the body than the mammoth, but not so high. But the fearful thing about it was that it ran and jumped like a stag in spite of its immense weight, and it attacked without provocation; it was certain death to come within the same horizon with it.

If it got wind of the hunters, they had it upon them instantly in full gallop, letting out a deafening roar, and with its six feet of horn, which grew in the middle of its forehead between the eyes, lowered to spit the wretch who ventured within miles of it. It was enough to paralyse anybody simply to see a beast of such supernatural size leap and turn as airily as any dog; it was the swiftest and heaviest beast in the world. When it came on, galloping like the lightning, it left holes in the ground big enough for a man to hide in, and it flung itself round before you had time to think; there was no escaping it.

The uncanniest thing about it was that it was scarcely

to be distinguished from the icefield or the willow-covered rocks which it haunted; it would lie down and look like an oblong block of stone on the ice or a clump of dwarf bushes, until it suddenly rose up and was *there* in a second. The hunters knew their fate when anything on the ice which they thought was dead suddenly came to life; it meant that they had seen the Unicorn and would be spitted or trampled beyond recognition within a minute. Only very few had escaped it, and from them came all that was known about the dreadful animal.

The Ice Folk believed that there was no more than the one specimen, which was a female and had been in existence ever since the beasts were driven out of the Lost Country. Then, it was said, the Unicorn had found no mate, but had been forced to live alone and become an old maid on the ice; and that was what made her so long and wiry of body and so cantankerous against all the world. The few who had survived the sight of her reported that she had quite small red eyes, as though she had wept for an eternity; and when at the new moon a baleful sound of groaning was heard from the icefield miles away, it used to be said that this was the Unicorn standing with her tail to the north wind and lamenting as though her heart would break the mate she had never had.

It was because she had never had young that she retained that terrifying youthfulness of movement; she still galloped like a calf and yet was so old that flint had formed on her shoulders. Eye-witnesses who still shuddered at the thought of it related that she was so wrinkled about the face and wherever you could see her skin for the white hair, that you could cut yourself on it; her hide positively lay in stony folds from age. And her horn had grown so long, much longer indeed than on a male, because though a virgin she had reached this great age.

To get the better of such a creature who still possessed all the speed and fire of her youth, had added to her child-

lessness the experience of immortality and hardened the two together in ice and loneliness, was regarded by the Ice Folk, not without reason, as more than impossible.

In what manner the hunt took place was never properly cleared up in detail; White Bear had had no one with him and had afterwards told the story in a rapture of song but with extreme conciseness. He had played with the old girl so long that she had fallen into a fissure in the ice and stuck there; and so he had finished her. The horn was as long as White Bear when it stood on the ground beside him, and White Bear was a tall man. It had so many rings that no one could count them; it was like the very thorn of affliction which had grown layer upon layer in all eternity.

Besides the horn White Bear brought back the Unicorn's heart; it was quite young and tender to look at, but so hard that no flint axe could bite on it.

Firegrim took charge of the Unicorn's horn on behalf of Carl the Old. To all the songs and jubilation with which the island greeted White Bear's great exploit, Firegrim turned his fat back. He appeared to have entirely forgotten the agreement.

But when at last White Bear bashfully suggested that now he supposed he would get May according to promise, Firegrim made an obscure speech which might be interpreted to mean that in asking White Bear to go out and slay the Unicorn he had really intended it as a harmless joke and imagined it would be taken as such. Any impartial person would certainly support his view that the proposal could only be interpreted as a delicately put refusal. But since White Bear with ingenuous precipitancy had taken him literally, he was disposed to construe his proposal as a pious wish to see White Bear duly mangled for his pains. Therefore, in returning with a whole skin, it was in point of fact White Bear who had deceived Fire-

grim and was in debt to the Allfather according to the turn things had taken. Such were Firegrim's words.

The palaver took place at the settlement of the Garmings, Carl's old home, which was holy ground, and events developed rapidly. When White Bear saw that May was denied him after all and that he was not to have fire for a hearth of his own, he was angry for a moment and involuntarily made a butting movement with his head, over which he wore the skin of a muskox with the horns on; and Firegrim misunderstood this, drew in his stomach and began to quiver about the eyebrows as though he felt a cold draught. White Bear smiled; his blood calmed down at once.

And now he took to scanning Firegrim long and leisurely, looked him well up and down and finally laughed aloud. Thereupon he smote the weakling with a little rod, the very smallest he could find, and turned to go. But Firegrim flared up and gave a screech like all the pangs of childbirth, and the Garmings rushed in on every side with thongs and cudgels to bind White Bear and give him a thrashing.

Then the spirit of Carl came upon White Bear, and before any one saw what was happening he had done the impossible thing, slain one of the sons of Firegrim, of the inviolable race. And while the others shrank back, dumb with horror, White Bear in his rage seized the corpse by one arm, put his foot on it and tore the arm out of the body, the arm that had threatened to beat him. With a loud roar White Bear slung down the torn-off limb at the feet of Firegrim, and now he was appeased and went his way.

That day White Bear carried off May, and they fled to the icefield.

## XIII

### WHITE BEAR AND MAY

NOBODY on the mountain isle approved of White Bear's misdeed, even in his own family. The murder one could understand, but he had flogged the priest, and the transgression had taken place on holy ground; it was a mad thing to do. Not a single voice was raised in White Bear's favour, when before a general concourse of the people he was proclaimed an outlaw from Allfather's Grave. He was now torn out of the hearts of the Ice Folk, and any who gave him but a friendly thought, let alone food or shelter, was outlawed with him. White Bear and May were abandoned to the icefield, fireless and accursed for ever, and if seen they were to be regarded as all other game, ripe for every man's harpoon.

The curse passed unheeded by White Bear and May; they had settled on a distant rocky island, miles away across the ice, where they had ample solitude for tasting young people's delight in each other's society, but at the same time the unsodden food of exile.

They were without fire, and raw meat sounds strong but in the long run makes such a tender appeal to be cooked. Still, it was summer, they lived in grand style in a tent of skins, and their skerry grew a trifle of herbs and corn, which May gathered as a seasoning to the raw joint. She patted together little loaves of corn, but unfortunately had to offer them unbaked and fresh to White Bear when he came home from hunting. White Bear ate them with much facial expression and sang a lay about warm food being after all an unmanly refinement. Later on towards

autumn they had a few berries from the mountain tops that rose above the icefield to flavour their raw diet; they were as well as could be in their frugality. But soon the air was chilled with night frosts and the first snow, and winter was upon them.

White Bear had built a good strong house of big stones and was well supplied with furs for it, and May had dried meat and herbs in store. Besides, White Bear had brought home a couple of wild reindeer, which were to be tethered upon the skerry until they were tame and could give milk. Thus they entered upon the winter. It was stormy and desperately cold. The couple were to experience going through a winter without fire. White Bear knew that it had been done before, but now he almost doubted the truth of it.

The nights were long and dark as in the bowels of the earth, at last they scarcely knew where they were or *whether* they were; it was well they were two, so that one could find the other. In the long black nights White Bear fell to meditating. He saw in his mind the home tract with all its rich fires, his eyes almost caught their brightness and his skin remembered their warmth when he thought of it. Now the Garmings and the rest of the dutiful crowd would be sitting round the fire, hugging themselves and saying that that murderer White Bear must soon be sunk so deep in poverty that he would beat his woman and say it was her fault. Before midwinter they might expect the pair begging around the settlement. White Bear smiled in the dark.

When the year sank in deadly cold and ceaseless snowstorms, so that sun and moon were threatened with extinction, White Bear was still laughing with May in his arms. But she shivered. They kept alive, owing to their youth and strength, but they suffered badly. The two settlers were too rich to grieve, they uttered no word of lament, but they were frightfully cold. White Bear decided to find fire.

First he set aside, one by one, every thought of getting it in any way from others. The simplest thing was to creep home and beg or steal fire from one of the hearths, but that was the very first thing he would not do. Less impossible it seemed to fetch a brand from the Garmings' sacred pyre itself, in a sort of formal visit with harpoon and axe and so on, but—no, White Bear could not. If Firegrim and his clan had inherited the pyre, it was theirs and no other's. His thoughts dwelt long on the mysterious Fire Stone, which he knew Firegrim preserved in Allfather's Grave. Supposing he broke in one night and took it? Of course Carl the Old was not walking about alive down there any more, that was a superstition; at most his bones lay mouldering in the grave and they wouldn't do one any harm. But still the Ancient had once lived and given his race fire; the proper way of course was to let all that concerned him remain as it was. It would be a shabby thing to offend the Forefather, so long as any other way out of the difficulty could be thought of. And there *was* the way of getting fire of one's own accord. This was what White Bear proposed to do. Yes, of course.

He collected fuel from the fir copse on the island and built it up in the form of a pyre; that was as far as he got that winter.

The year after they emigrated. They stayed over the summer on their skerry, and a remarkably hot and violent summer it was, with scorching sun and almost daily thunderstorms which drenched the ice-sheet and wasted it visibly. The skerry was cleared of ice to double its usual extent, and the surrounding islands also appeared much larger. The ice-sheet blinked in the twilight of its green abysses against the lightning in the light nights. When the rain was not actually pouring down, the clouds were piled up high into the sky, white as fire and strangely alive, growing out of one another with a swelling brightness beneath the sun, till they closed again all round and let loose a warm shower over the

icefield. The lightning struck the ice and split it to the bottom, the thunderclaps echoed in the dripping crevasses. It was wild weather. Neither White Bear nor May missed fire that summer. But White Bear had not forgotten the winter, it still stuck at the root of his heart that he had seen May suffer. He knew that they would have to get fire.

The wild summer passed without anything particular happening in the cave except that they got a prodigy of a baby, which White Bear carried up into the rain, shouting with joy. He was born with two little bits of teeth and was dedicated to great deeds by the delighted father. And a great eater he became.

But when the air began to grow cold for the second time on the skerry, White Bear got uneasy. For he had not found fire. The nights turned first blue and then black. White Bear groaned in his sleep, when he was not lying awake and pondering. One night he took May in his arms and she heard that he had been weeping as he confided to her that he could not find fire anywhere. But didn't she think they ought to leave the place? Yes, May was willing to go with him to the world's end. That decided it. White Bear's plan was to go south. If he could not get fire, they must go and live somewhere else. Far to the south he had heard that the icefield came to an end, and there was said to be a warm country with great forests inhabited by naked savages; they would have to try a journey in that direction.

Autumn was far advanced when the little family made a start. Late as it was in the year, the thunder gave them a farewell salute of crashes and deluging streams over the icefield, which gleamed with its abysmal green beneath the lightning. White Bear looked about him—flash upon flash all round the sky, a world full of fire, and not a spark for him! He smiled, but it was an old worn-out smile which ran in deep, fixed furrows in his face. Then they left and never once turned to look back.

A little herd of half-tame reindeer and a quantity of skins for tent and clothing was all the family possessed besides White Bear's weapons and May's baskets of all kinds of odds and ends, and thus equipped they set out on their way to the south. Winter overtook them, and it was severe, but it helped them to get on when the new-fallen snow on the icesheet froze together into vast snowfields which gave better going than the fissured ice.

All that winter they were on the trail, though without coming very far, and White Bear felt that he was growing into an old man. It tried him to the marrow to keep famine away from the little wandering tent in the midst of the snow; he often had to follow a trail for days and nights before he could come back with game, and all that time he knew that his two in the tent were fairly unprotected; before him the fleet-footed beast that would not let itself be taken, and behind him the fear that dragged at his heels, but on he had to go so that he might turn back. When he came home he found the tent snowed under, while his few tame reindeer stumbled about in the snow, a scattered flock with hobbled forelegs, breathing rime.

Upon them White Bear never laid hands, however hard it might be to find meat; their milk was May's resource when he was away from the tent, and they formed in themselves a reserve which was only to be attacked as a last shift. May got them moss and lichen from the loose blocks and shingle that travelled on the top of the glaciers and defended them against the wolves when White Bear had the dogs out hunting. But when he had brought down a good head of game, they struck the tent and pushed on.

When snowstorms came on there was nothing for it but to go to earth in a cave and let the storm spend its rage outside. In this way they passed weeks in unbroken darkness, during which they almost lost the power of speech. They endured hardships which were not to be recalled in after days, since they paralyzed the soul and blotted out

their own traces. That winter seemed so long and bitter that the minds of the two were clouded by it, and at last they no longer remembered that they had left their home, or where they were going, or even who they were. Thousands of years might well have passed over them. The northern lights stretched over the sky in silent frenzy and began to hang like a spectre of eternity, near and yet far, over the heads of the fireless family, lost in the snow and in their wanderings.

And yet that winter was shorter than usual, the thaw came early and in a rush. But that did not help White Bear so long as they were travelling on the snow. Of late they had been getting on faster, for White Bear had found out how to drive what afterwards became a sledge. Instead of making the reindeer carry the tent and the rest of the gear, it occurred to him to let them drag the load, underneath which he placed the birch spars he used for tent poles, to make it slide more easily over the snow. The reindeer were able to pull more than they could carry, and it was not long before White Bear and May sat up on top of the load and let themselves be drawn too. This was a great improvement, which united the reindeer and the family even more closely than before. White Bear was pleased with the sledge and soon found a form which he kept to as the best. He had no need to place more than two birch spars under the load, but they had to be curved at the fore-end to keep them from sticking in the snow and to keep the lashings from being worn through. To prevent the load dragging in the snow he laid bent pieces of wood across the runners and lashed them fast, and then the sledge was finished. White Bear provided the hands and necessity did the rest.

In fine weather, when the sun shone upon the crisp snowfields, White Bear made the reindeer break into a trot, shouting lustily to them; and then it was as though he and May awoke to life and knew each other's dear grimy faces.

Their hardships might lull them into a sort of mental blindness in which they lost sense of time, but real sadness was unknown to them. They came to themselves again in sunshine, tearing along on the sledge over the frozen snow with the fresh coughing reindeer in front pulling at the traces and the dogs giving tongue at the side, hey ho! The youngster stuck his head out of the bag on May's back and rolled big dreamy eyes at the world that swung past the sledge. Thus they covered the ground.

And then they reached the sea. White Bear had set his course for the south but had veered away to the eastward towards the sunrise, and this took him off the icefield and down to the coast of Upland. When spring thawed the snow, which also covered the land south of the ice barrier, White Bear saw that they had come down on to an ice-free lowland intersected by lakes, bogs and rivers and studded with rocky heights which continued out to sea as holms and skerries.

The ice-sheet lay far to the northward, but it was not long since it had been here, stretching right out into the sea. The coast and all the skerries were still naked and worn to roundness by the ice; White Bear saw traces of the icesheet everywhere in the lowlands. Farther up the coast to the northward an arm of the ice-sheet still came right out to the shore through a fjord, and White Bear could hear it crashing and sighing when the ice broke off in the sea and floated away as icebergs. But not many years were to pass before the ice receded altogether from the coast, and what icebergs were still to be seen swimming far out at sea came from the extreme north.

No doubt but White Bear opened his nostrils, sniffed and sniffed again when he made the sea's acquaintance. There was something hidden away in his soul which the salt smell awoke, something he did not understand; it was Carl's longing for the sea which lay innate in his blood. His dream of the sea was a love-child of Carl's soul, and it

implanted a dormant instinct in all his descendants which a salt breath from the beach was enough to awaken. White Bear drank in the sea air with great open nostrils, and the sea took him in its arms.

The first sign of this was that he immediately wanted to go farther. He was already on a journey, the goal of which was the south and its forests, but the sea's billowy wandering and wandering out beyond its own limits added its call and changed his whole being to outward longing. Here, where he could come no farther, he semed only to have reached his true starting-point. The sea barred the way, but it was to be his path.

Here it was that they settled in the lowlands, among copse-ringed bogs and lakes, so far south of the icefield that it could only be glimpsed in the distance as a greenish shimmer under the northern sky; on the other side their horizon was bounded by the belt of skerries and the open sea. There was game enough in the country, and soon there was more, hosts of game, as the animals made their way into the ice-free land. The freshwater lakes and streams up country were alive with fish, salmon, pike, and eels, which White Bear soon acquired a taste for and learned to entice with curly worm and a hook inside it. The very sea was like a flashing field of fish; the whale chased shoals of herring up on to the beach, where they lay so thick that you waded in them. Ah, it was a fat land, and White Bear's heart fed on it so that his outward longing grew stronger. His soul dwelt on the moonbeam bridge from skerry to skerry, when the sea was rising and embraced the world in its stormy, roaring infinity.

But they stayed there. Years passed, and they were still living in the low country between the ice-sheet and the sea. May added one child after another to the family. Although they could come no farther, White Bear for his part was always teeming with plans of travel, his thoughts

were never busied with anything but the means of getting on. In winter of course he had the sledge, with which he made long journeys round about on the frozen lakes, or out among the skerries and sometimes a long way to sea, when the ice was frozen fast, but wherever he went the open water stopped him at last. In summer the sledge was useless, and the spring thaws often changed the lowlands almost into a single swollen lake, which shut in White Bear just as emphatically as the sea. Something had to be done.

On the icefield there had been nothing to make men take to navigation, though it was likely enough that the mammoth hunters knew how to get across a chance stream in the spring thaws with an ice block for a ferry. There was a dim legend that once in the beginning of the ages the Allfather had been good at sailing on the water; that must have been how he came from the south, some said on a tree-trunk, others on the back of an enchanted tortoise; in any case through powers which ordinary mortals did not possess—what had not been possible to the One-Eyed! White Bear had never dreamed of equalling Allfather in supernatural powers; he was only a man trying this way and that, since that was what his hands were for. Nevertheless White Bear acquired the art by the path of experience.

Big timber was not to be found in the country; but that it had once grown there White Bear could see for himself on clear days, when the sun shone down into the brown bog water, at the bottom of which lay a muddy, confused floor of fallen tree-trunks of all thicknesses. It was evidently a drowned forest and it suggested all kinds of ideas to White Bear when he looked down into that still and sunken world which belonged as he could understand to a bygone age. The sky with its dizzily distant clouds lay upon the surface of the deep bog lakes, and only when he looked right through his own image lying lifelike be-

neath him did the water become transparent so that the bottom and the sunken forest stood out. Strange, when he could see the sunken forest, he himself was gone, and when he saw himself, the trees below vanished!

Whatever might be the truth about the forest that had been, it was a *forest* and nothing else that White Bear was looking for, but it ought to be a living one for choice, and it lay far away, in the South, the very embodiment of the future he yearned for. One day he slipped a thong with a noose in it under one of the big round logs, which looked so fresh with traces of where the leaves had grown and still some resin on its bark; it had struck him that perhaps he might turn the forest of the past to account by getting a craft out of it to take him to the South. And the idea was not a bad one, but the trunk broke in pieces when he began to haul in, and a piece which he got up turned out to be nothing but black, liquid mud inside. Thus White Bear's forest sank in a double sense.

Meanwhile he was on another track, less pregnant with sentiment but more in the direction of his goal. What White Bear wanted was to cross the water; the sea lay between him and the South, and he had to get on. Without knowing it he had long been making progress in a small way. The wide fens and morasses of the low country were overgrown with scattered thickets of birch, aspen, and various kinds of dwarf trees and bushes, of which only the birch attained any size, though without growing into timber; White Bear had to put all thoughts of tree-trunk navigation out of his head. The tortoises he came across were no bigger than a hand, so if it was one of them Allfather had sailed on, there must undoubtedly have been some magic in it. All the same it was worth noticing that the empty shell of a tortoise floated very well on water, it was just shaped for that; but of course it could not bear a man.

White Bear was above all heavy and he was aware of it

every day. But when he wandered about in the wet marshes, intersected by innumerable watercourses, he was in the habit of crossing smaller streams by throwing bushes and branches into the water until they choked it up and formed a bridge; and if the water was too deep he had also found out how to heap together enough branches and whole trees to float under him and had poled himself across. To prevent the mass floating apart he tied a thong round it. And this, with time and repetition, became a raft. White Bear was now a skipper.

He was everlastingly splashing about in the water with new and improved craft, it became second nature to him. Everything had to be tried on water, whether it would float, whether it was watertight, whether it made good headway and kept its balance. White Bear was always busy on the beach, barelegged and lost to the world in his wet experiments, blue with cold and dripping at the nose; the sun came and went over him. He developed into a great carpenter and a regular waterman. And yet, strangely enough, there was nothing White Bear dreaded more than the wet, with an inborn horror which made this giant who knew not fear start twitching all over and roaring like a wild boar when he got into deep water. White Bear could not swim. He saw that all the animals gladly trotted out into the water, but it didn't suit his paces. Just when the sea bore him up, when he felt its yielding and heavy power carry his legs off the bottom, he was seized with a frenzy, an impossible desire to climb, which he never got over in his life. His boys, though, were born swimmers who slipped in and out of the water like otters, and the numb flesh always lay in folds all over their bodies from taking refreshing baths and then reviving themselves in the rain ashore.

All White Bear's sons were fair, with a perfectly bare white skin which was coarse and fulled from always being wet. In summer they got freckled in memory of the dark

blood brought into the race by mothers fetched from the jungles, the sunburnt skin coming back in spots. They were blond with a reddish yellow tinge, like a lingering suspicion of the dark hair the North had bleached. Their eyes had the summer blink of the icefield. They were to be great sailors.

White Bear, who was so helpless in the water, had every reason to meditate upon things which could float and bear him up. But behind it all lay the great thought that he would travel on, on over the sea, and this yearning he bequeathed to his sons as a heritage.

It is not saying too much that while they were living on the coast White Bear never for a single day had an abiding place, and yet the family stayed there till the children were grown up. The boys had become men with prolific hands and memories, rivalling their father in carpentry and thinking. The tool created the work, and the work created the tool; White Bear and his sons now ground their stone axes and chisels, unlike their forefathers who had left them roughhewn. It took much time and pains to smoothe off a hard flint axe on the grindstone, but then it went into the wood where you wanted it to go and did not spoil its own bite. White Bear and his sons invented, and novelty brought them wisdom. They had Carl's vision, the keen, close-set eyes that flashed and flashed over the things they worked on; they drank in life from what they produced. And at last, they got so far that the first ship stood built upon the beach before the settlement.

It was a long raft of light birch spars joined and lashed together, with a rounded bottom and made watertight in the joints with tallow and animal hair, so that it would not only float but kept a dry space inboard. It was not small, could carry several men and made good way. The poles for driving it forward were flattened at the ends so as to work better on the water when it got too deep to reach the bottom. White Bear and his sons rowed

on long trips on the lakes inland and were well satisfied with their ship. If they were going with the wind they cut leafy branches and held them up, so that they blew along without having to use the oars; a skin on a spar drew still better.

White Bear shaded his eyes with his hand and looked out towards the south, where sea and sky merged in one on the horizon; now they would soon be off! But the ship would have to be made bigger, or they would have to build more, to take the whole family.

May looked at her husband in embarrassed silence when he declared, with happy blue eyes and the air of an eagle flapping its wings, that now they would be off. Her man had said that for so many blessed summers that May's children had grown as big and—no harm meant—as unaccountable as their father. May looked with profound admiration at her White Bear, who could keep on beaming with hope as in their first boundless youth, though neither of them was young any more; but she was afraid of his plans and when he was holding forth about the voyage she embraced her home with the look of one who has been struck down and cannot rise again. May had something to lose.

She had not been idle through the long years while White Bear every day, so to speak, *had to be off;* while they had been settled she had imperturbably entrenched herself in her daily life and added to her household. No future existed for May and no far-reaching dreams, but she was faithful in small things. While White Bear in fervid forgetfulness of everything around him was busy with his boats, May was dutifully building up a practice which was of a very real nature and which grew with the years under her hands. She never got excited, never changed her habits, that she knew of, and yet, in her beneficent, woman's way, she had produced many new and indispensable things in the course of years.

White Bear perhaps did not see much of her little daily efforts, being always on the go and always blinded by his sailor's dreams; but she saw herself as she was, reserved and set in motion once for all as a kindly fate, to be White Bear's support and the other half of himself. May was always there, had always been there, full of vigour and gentleness in the pouring rain with her long fair hair flowing over her shoulders, always a child with her, always about, backwards and forwards on the short paths of the homestead, feeding and protecting. To see her beyond a call from the settlement was a rare thing, and it meant extra herbs for dinner.

There was much thunder in those years, and in a chance flash White Bear would see May standing in the drowning rain, surrounded by her children and domestic animals, reposing in herself with calm eyes in the midst of the storm, while all sought refuge in her arms. The thunder was beyond her comprehension, like all that was the affair of the Great One on high or came within the sphere of *Men*, but the children and the timid animals came to her to share the calm that proceeded from her heart. And thus White Bear remembered her afterwards, when youth had vanished; the taste of rain like clouds on the tongue, the fiery fumes of lightning close at hand, and then May with her hair rained down her back, smelling like the wild Dane-wort, which stretches up flowery hands to sun and rain.

But now May was a weatherbeaten, case-hardened mother who defended her own, armed with taciturnity and with experience in biding her time and letting well alone. She gave a candid smile every year when White Bear exultingly announced a new ship and off to-morrow, feeling sure in herself that it would have to be improved upon and rebuilt yet again. Only when he talked long and seriously about leaving, making her think she could see it happening, did she grow perplexed and let her eye range uncom-

prehendingly over the homestead where they had taken root. What about the cows? Were they to go sailing on the water? May had a growing field of barley and another of flax, besides a whole kitchen garden with beds of peas, thyme, onions and roots; could she take her fields with her? What was that he said?

Yes indeed, May had something to lose. She kept domestic animals and carried on agriculture. It had come about entirely of itself, first when they had no fire and necessity forced them to every shift, and afterwards when they had found fire again and there was no end to what she could do. The cows were near to her heart; she had got them while the hearth was still cold and they had been the half of life to her and the children; she would never have lived through the cold days without them.

The wild cattle migrated into the low country when the ice-sheet receded; light, slender, deer-like animals with big wet eyes and as inquisitive as on the first day of creation. The little newborn calves, which still sailed in their walk as they followed their mother, appealed to May's insatiable girlish heart; she squatted down and spread out her hands to entice them up to her knees.

At first they were scarcely shy at all, they only became so when White Bear had hunted them for some time, and even then the cows in their innocence would stand a little way off, spread out in a semicircle, all calmly chewing the meadow flowers as they turned their horned heads towards this unknown creature. If he came too near, they trotted off, but soon had to turn again and stand and look, cautiously leaning backwards on all four legs, with moist nostrils and eyes that darkened as a night. One or other of them was forced by unconquerable curiosity to advance a step or two out of the circle and even tried to adopt quite a threatening attitude, raising a forefoot and setting it down again hard in a very dangerous-looking way, and the cow drew a deep breath; but the mild eyes did not

altogether carry out this warlike bearing, and indeed the cow soon fell back of its own accord, cast its head to one side with quivering eyelids and turned about.

White Bear's spear flew when the time came, and one of the animals lay rolling with the shaft in its body, while the herd galloped off. He preferred to kill the big bulls, which gave better sport and sometimes stirred his blood by themselves taking the offensive.

There were now dense herds of cattle in the lowlands; on sunny days you could look from a height over miles of bogs and water-meadows, where the shadows of clouds above which flecked the land mingled with herds of beasts as far as the eye could reach. Not all that roamed there were wild cattle, deer and aurochs were equally thick, herds of wild swine broke in and out of the brushwood, the bear haunted little islands among the bilberries, and by the brook the fox whipped out a trout with his paw. The elk wandered in great herds through the young birch copse, the dwarf fir took wings as you looked at it and gave birth to the mighty capercailzie, the heather became alive with black game wherever you went. The foreground was full of beasts, and in the distance the herds floated together into misty streaks which were merged in the horizon and continued beyond it. Here it was easy to get meat, there was more than enough, and White Bear had ample time to work at his shipbuilding so as to get away.

But the very first year May asked White Bear to catch some cows alive which she would try to tame; the reindeer did not thrive, they were homesick for the icefield and left off giving milk. So she got her first cows, and the very same day they were caught they lay down compliantly in their tethers and began with deep and satisfied eyes to chew the cud. They had far more milk than the reindeer and they were so gentle. They became the children's best friends. May loved them, they were her treasures and her gossips. She was always about them in

confidential chat, the warmth of their hotblooded horns passed through her hands into her heart. They had a sweet smell from the grass they ate and from the nourishment they had to spare for others.

May became an artist with the cows' milk all over her big motherly hands. She made cheese. This came of itself through her keeping milk in a chaudron, and May always had a supply of it pressed into round cakes. When the men came in from their wet exertions in fishing and floating on the sea, you may be sure they were thankful to Mother for a slice of cheese.

In return the boys made her knives and awls of bone. White Bear's interest was attracted by the yarn May and the girls sat patiently twining in their fingers, especially after he began to make nets for fishing and had use for a lot of yarn; as usual he tried a short cut and after experimenting for a day with sparkling eyes he came and presented May with a *spindle,* which could twine ten times as much flax in the same time. It was a little stick with a round disc, which was whirled round till it ran of itself and span the yarn so nicely; what was sufficiently twined you wound up on the stick, so that you could go on spinning without the yarn getting fouled; the spindle was a great success with the women and henceforward it hummed continually in the home.

After fire came back and May was able to bake herself a large outfit of pots and pans, she also made butter. If the truth must be told, this discovery was due to May's personal requirements, her fondness for anointing herself with fragrant things. She and her daughters began by smearing themselves with the thick cream which lay on the top of the milk and could be skimmed off; but the salve became stronger and more penetrating by being allowed to stand, and especially by being thoroughly shaken in the pot. This was a long job, at which they had to take turns, but they did it with a will, till at last the butter

came and they could rub it into their skins. White Bear took pleasure in the salve, but his grosser nature preferred it for internal use, and May then prepared it for his palate in larger portions. Thus by degrees butter was introduced as a luxury and a relief to the monotony of their daily diet.

In the baking of bread also May had accomplished much. But everything connected with corn and the husbandry she had introduced was based upon a special mystic pact with the earth, May's own little womanly worship, which traced back to that spring and that day of joy when fire came again.

## XIV

### THE THAW

TO White Bear all things came as gifts. When he was sent into exile, accursed and banned by his people, his fate willed that he should find his way to milder climes, to an Eden of game (where this man never felt at home); but he was to have more than enough of good things, since even the weather itself changed and turned warmer. He had directed his steps to the south, and the South came to meet him.

The great thaw sparkled in the eye of the sun over the North. The ice-sheet was in rapid retreat. From the place where White Bear lived, down in the lowlands, he could see at first the green ice-blink on the edge of the horizon in the north-west, but it shrank more and more and finally disappeared altogether; the ice-sheet had withdrawn beyond the range of vision to the northward. This was not to be wondered at, for the weather that had come on was enough to melt mountains. Thunder-showers and warm rain gushed down incessantly. All through the spring drowning showers passed over the earth, and between them the sun broke through, so smilingly powerful, so full of hope, that even the beasts raised their heads from the wet earth and looked upon the world as though it had become new.

Lurid hail-showers crackling with lightning chased over the sky in the midst of the sunshine and thrashed the earth white, and when the shower was past and the thunder rolled into the distance, the rainbow stretched its airy vault over the greensward, where the drops hung sparkling like tears on a child's eyelashes. One, two and three

glorious rainbows swung themselves up across the sky, one outside the other, bridges in the colours of Paradise, standing and yet not standing upon the earth between the clouds and the victorious sun. Every shower was a lost battle which gave new birth to hope.

Days and nights together the rain streamed from the sky, straight down, and the earth received it flayed and furrowed, the lakes swelled, the rivers rushed foaming and deep to the brim through the low country and whirled into the sea. But the rain was warm and bore a new age in its inexhaustible womb.

The eyes of White Bear's children were full of life from gazing at the rain, which tore up the puddles so that they looked like a lot of little people jumping up from the ground, stretching themselves an instant and then going back again, while the rain constantly bred fresh ones. The rainbow stood above their childhood and promised them a whole world.

Winter still came every year, but the cold did not last so long and the spring thaw set in with ever-increasing force. The low country was flooded every year, and more than once White Bear would have been hard put to it to save his household but for his boats. There were times when the country was under water for miles with only the heights showing up as islands and holms, and there the wild beasts took refuge in black frenzied herds which it was pitiable to approach, while just as many floated about drowned in the deep. White Bear, who had built his ships half for the pleasure of it, began to suspect a destiny behind; stern necessity might find a use for what he had produced in sport. White Bear smiled so that his whole blond face crinkled.

Was not the sun his friend? Could he not put his trust in the earth? For it had given him fire of itself, when he had no fire and was alone. Sun and earth had joined together to thaw the icefield and give him fire. Never did

White Bear forget the day when the rock outside his homestead opened in a smoking gulf and sent forth fire from the bowels of the earth, an hour that had begun in unspeakable terror and ended in mad joy.

The whole earth rocked as though its doom was at hand, there was a deep booming under ground, frightful shocks, so that even White Bear fell flat; and from the fens came unrecognizable roars of fear, the beasts lost their wits and were thrown into confusion without regard to friend or foe.

And in the midst of this paralyzing deadly terror White Bear saw fire shooting up from the crack in the ground, the bushes were on fire; and then he got up and laughed like a madman, seeing the whole joke, he staggered towards the fire, for the earth was running in waves beneath him, he fell down and laughed, got up again and at last had hold of the fire. His heart was ready to jump out of his mouth with happiness and thanks. Fire! He had fire and yelled in his immense joy; he came storming home to May, who was lying on her face and holding on; he swung the burning branch over her head. Fire, fire! Yes, the earth had given White Bear fire, for it was good.

The day the fire was lighted in his house he went out and wept in the warm rain; rain and tears ran down into his beard, while, dazed and drunken with gratitude, he looked up into the sunlit sky.

That was many years ago now, and White Bear had grown-up sons to whom he could talk of his friendly relations with the earth and the sun. But every spring White Bear kindled a great bonfire in commemoration of the earth's wealth and bounty. He brought a young bull for an offering, and while Heaven was gracious enough to receive the smoke, White Bear and his sons regaled themselves with the delicious roast meat. It was at the time the cuckoo's note is heard and the northern sky begins

to gleam at night from the not too distant sun, that White Bear had received fire, and at that season he lighted his joy fire in memory of the first blaze the earth had given him.

White Bear's sons ever after kindled bonfires at the same season, even when they were dispersed and lived so far apart that they could not even see each other's fires. And this custom never went out of use in the North.

But May, who was naturally excluded from the doings of White Bear and the sons, the immoderate men, approached the earth secretly in her own womanly fashion, thankful for the dear fire which now burned upon her hearth.

She went out when no one knew it, and while she saw that the night was light and the sun at rest behind the distant icefield, which would never more threaten her and hers, she offered a bowl of her corn upon the earth, the fat grains of barley that she had gathered ear by ear the autumn before and patiently rubbed out of the husks in her hands. She knew of no better gift, and as the earth had now vouchsafed them fire so that she could bake bread again, it should have an offering. It was such a small one that nobody might see it, but she did not think the earth should be left without a gift in the light night. May strewed her barley on the naked earth, bashful as a girl, and went in when it was done.

In the course of the summer the barley came up and made a fine field of corn. This May interpreted to mean that the earth had privily accepted her gift, and she flushed with humble gratitude when she grasped that it had now replied by privily giving back her corn many times over. Should she pluck it, was it for her? It must be, for how could a woman be offered a favour without yielding to it in warm submission? May explained the cornfield as a great unselfish wooing, which she accepted by making obeisance to the ground she stood on; her knees lost their

strength at the graciousness of the earth. As a mother and as a child she took what the Strong One offered. Thus the first yellow cornfield waved in the summer wind, a secret pact, a beautiful and innocent tryst, between the rich Earth and May's dumb girlish heart.

Next spring May went out again and offered her corn to the earth, while the men folk were up diverting themselves with their bonfire and greeting the sun in the north. And that summer she had still bigger fields of corn. But she did not harvest them entirely in the autumn; she left a part, which she thought the mighty Earth might deign to keep.

After that she arranged her gifts with some shrewdness, like the practical woman she was, according to what she wanted in return; she offered the seed of flax, which was no good to eat, and got back plants for her spindle. Quite unfeelingly she sowed turnip seed and afterwards took the turnips, though by their nature they ought to be the earth's share; to make up for this she let the roots of her cabbages stay in the ground and took the tops herself. But whatever she did, the earth tacitly abode by the pact, and sun and rain gave growth to the private arrangement between the two.

And that was the beginning of May's husbandry. Her pact with the earth and then the tame cattle had been May's joy in all the years she was bearing her children and watching them grow up, while White Bear had been talking every single day about breaking up and going on. But so long as they only stayed where they were, May had found her whole existence in the days and had made a home for her children.

Her goodness was never forgotten. May was so great-hearted that her eyes moistened when she saw the birds flying with straws in their beaks to build a nest. She was so gentle that for her sake the rough men folk, her sons, never hurt an animal except for food. For all ages to

come the memory of May was bound up with the calves and the little lambs which early in the year lay upon the ground newly born and cold beside their mothers; the very month of spring was called after her and blessed in her name.

But the day came nevertheless when at last May had to lose her home and go through a world of fear and pain before a new one was given her. One year the thaw came so suddenly and violently that it tore the family out of their homestead and threw them upon the sea.

It began with unusually early thaws and freshlets from the mountains; the rivers overflowed their banks even before the ice was thoroughly broken up. Great fragments of glacier ice were carried down so rapidly that they had not time to melt on the way. That things were serious in the highlands White Bear could see by the number of dead beasts floating down the rivers; up there every living thing must be up to the neck and beyond. Human corpses too came down in the early spring flood, and as a rule White Bear knew them; he began to be anxious about how the Ice Folk were faring.

One day he saw a corpse floating on the waters with its swollen paunch sticking up; a raven sat on it tugging at a long strip of skin in its effort to make a hole; White Bear sailed up to the dead man and saw that it was Firegrim the priest. From that day White Bear held the raven dear.

But he had other things to think of than his former persecutors; earthquake and spring flood came, the one overwhelming mountains and with thunder and fire in its mouth, the other swift, silent with strangling arms. Far to the northward where lay the icefield and the mountains White Bear saw a pillar of fire miles high shoot up into the air mixed with immense blocks of ice, whole icebergs which were thrown up to the sky amid flames and lightnings and rained down again. After that a chalk-white

cloud of steam rolled up and in an instant filled the whole sky. Then followed darkness, then a hurricane, and mud rained down from heaven. Fire traversed the darkening world.

And there arose a thunderous foaming from the mountains which in a short time reached the coast and was met by a howl of storm from the sea; it was the flood rushing down from the violent melting of the ice-sheet. It came in vast wild streams with a roaring breast of solid water in front which advanced towards the sea, where the storm wave reared itself to receive it. Shores and skerries vanished in the foaming conflict.

And when the storm subsided and a dead calm followed, the lowlands appeared as a single swollen lake which made one with the sea. Slowly the surface rose and sank with all the stars of night in its black, drowning embrace. Swimming islands of perished animals floated quietly in great herds on the same spot, gently heaving up and down upon the deep like a forest of bodies, legs and antlers, under the rays of the moon.

But White Bear and all his house had long lain out on the open sea. When White Bear saw that the icefield and the earth were in conflict and that there was no longer any abiding place on dry land, he made ready his rafts and ships, took in provisions and fire and went on board with his whole household. It was like the hour of death to May. But the burning mountains and the rain of fire prompted departure. So they confided themselves to the sea. They were already far out when the flood burst down from the mountains, its wave had lost its strength ere reaching them and did not capsize their craft. It fell dead calm, and the fleet lay in the same place rising and falling slowly with the breath of the sleeping sea. White Bear and his children sat in their ships without hope, dumb as the constellations above them and in the deep sea. Huge sea monsters broke the smooth swell between the ice-

bergs, blew out hot breath and dived again, their wet dorsal fins gleaming in the moonlight.

But morning came, the sun rose in the east, red and all-powerful. A fresh breeze hurried over the sea to meet the sun. White Bear and his sons set up skins to catch the wind, and the ships began to advance.

And when they came well out to sea, the interior of the land they had left rose before their eyes and they saw that the mountains in the north lay naked in every hue as in the dawn of time. But at the highest point a mountain rose with a round top from which a pillar of smoke ascended calmly and gracefully into the blue sky. It was Gunung Api whose youth had returned. Then White Bear knew that peace had come again. The sun had conquered and accepted the earth's sacrifice.

But the wind drove the craft from land, out towards the east, till there was nothing but the wild open sea on every side, and they thought they must die. On the tenth day, when they all lay exhausted, land appeared in the east. White Bear saw then that they would be saved and called the land Lifeland.

Here they settled. White Bear kindled a bonfire and took possession of the new country beneath a whirring flight of birds coming from the south and making for the northern lakes.

Here was the same conflict of sun, water and clouds, and the earth lay bared and steaming from the bath, now brightened, now shaded by the hastening clouds with which the sun sported. But spring triumphed. The rainbow stretched its airy bridge over the greensward as a sign that here too man was at home.

White Bear looked about him and found birch trees, good and plentiful timber for shipbuilding; here he could build prodigious vessels to take him all over the world, and here he would stay.

## XV

## THE SETTLER

IN Lifeland White Bear met with the primitive folk. It never occurred to him that the little scurvy savages who infested the thickets like vermin were the beautiful naked people he had dreamt of finding in the southern forests; and yet it was they. They were directly descended from the same people who long ago had thrust out Carl and left him at the mercy of winter.

It took White Bear a long time to reassure the shy natives sufficiently to get a proper sight of them; at first they hid in the bushes like foxes and took to flight when any one came too near. They usually ran off on all fours to avoid as much as possible being seen, and as they crawled through the grass with a stiff hide over the back for protection, they had a trick of turning their faces over their shoulders, showing all their teeth and then running on. When they had come a certain distance, they stood up and ran straight before them till they thought they were in safety. White Bear called them the Badgers from their tracks and from the smell there was about them.

It dawned upon him that they regarded him and his tall, blond sons with the deepest awe and terror and probably took them for supernatural beings. And what indeed were they to make of giants with fair hair and blue eyes who came over the water in *ships*, something of which they had no conception? White Bear had to make many signs of friendship and go with green boughs in his hands instead of weapons before they would approach, and even then they

came creeping on their stomachs and squirming like puppies with fright and submission.

May the gentle squatted down before them and enticed their little ones with barley cakes on her knees.

At last friendly relations were established, but even after the Badgers had learnt that the tall white men did not intend to eat them up, they continued to lie in the dust before them as before supernatural creatures. Thus White Bear met with no difficulties from their side when he established himself in the country.

It was rich in pine and birch forests, full of game. Inland lay endless steppes, where herds of wild horses and sheep grazed as far as the eye could reach. Here White Bear saw the wild horse for the first time; it had left Scandinavia long before his day. True, there were legends that his forefathers in a distant age had known an animal that had only one toe on each foot and ran like the wind, but White Bear treated them as fables like so many more that were told of old times; here however was clear proof.

White Bear expected great things from a closer acquaintance with the wild horses. They were handsome animals with traces of black stripes on their dun flanks and big lively ears. They were very inquisitive and spirited, full of play, always ready to kick up and dash across the steppe in a joyous gallop. White Bear's boys were greatly taken with the dashing animals and tried to approach them with a piece of bread in one hand and a coiled thong in the other, and the wild horses answered with an eager snort, dancing round in a most engaging way; they were very willing, but still, if the boys came too near, they set off at such a gallop that there was nothing to be seen of them but the hollows of hoofs in the air. They gave fiery ringing neighs, especially the high-mettled colts with flying mane and a white half moon showing in their eyes; the boys called to them with every show of affection, and the horses curtsied with their heads and answered in a glad

whinny, but would not let them come near at present.

The fact was that the natives only knew of killing the horses, they had no notion of taming them and making brothers of them. They were altogether unfeeling towards animals, in a way that struck White Bear as both foreign and revolting; not content with killing them in the chase, they tortured them in cold blood for their amusement; the idea of approaching them fraternally was the more remote, so far as White Bear could understand, in that these cowardly plantigrades considered themselves elevated in a positively transcendental degree above all that bore the name of beast. But the Badgers had many peculiarities of which they were proud, and which White Bear was glad to let them keep for their own.

The fortunes of the primitive folk had been very various since Carl the Old parted from them in the Lost Country. The majority, we know, had gone due south and scattered into distant tropical lands, where nothing was heard of them until the best part of a geological period later, when a descendant of Carl, Columbus, found a branch of the family in the West Indian islands. Still later another of Carl's descendants, Darwin, met with their remotest offshoots, in the state in which they had begun and ended, in the Land of Fire.

But at the time in which White Bear lived they had reached no farther than Southern Europe, with the beginnings of an immigration to Africa and Asia. There were always northern outposts who stood the cold better than the rest, and when the climate of the North became milder, many of them found their way back into the old tracts, following the migrating birds and moving regularly with the seasons. When the primitive folk emigrated from Scandinavia it was continuous with the rest of Europe; afterwards open sounds came between, which they were not yet able to cross; meanwhile they turned off along the shores of the Baltic countries, while at the same time send-

ing offshoots far into Russia; and here it was that White Bear found them.

In the beginning they could not understand one another, and each was apt to think the other had no speech at all, only meaningless sounds; but they soon learned to infer what was meant from what was said, and this difference of language was the first thing that led to the formation of ideas, which afterwards took firm shape. Moreover it was not long before White Bear discovered words in the Badgers' apparently outlandish tongue which seemed familiar to him and must once have sounded the same in both languages. The Badgers could repeat lays and ancient legends; amongst others they had a misty tradition about a man who murdered his brother and was banished to a desert land. White Bear heard of the evil deed with much sympathy and gave the narrator a piece of bread.

The northern primitive men were not altogether the same as when Carl left them. Homelessness and want had changed them for the worse, had made them sickly from birth and more jealous of one another than they were before. There was nothing left of the freedom from care and softness of fur in which their jungle ancestors had once rejoiced, they no longer swung in the tree-tops with an apple in one hand and all the rest of the fruit shaken down on to the ground for amusement; they had lost their coat of hair, which was worn off by bad times and replaced by sweat and the dust of exile. The only thing they had learnt was to cover their backs against the winter they always fled from; and this was the literal truth, since they did not know how to clothe themselves properly but dragged about an old sheepskin, with which they protected their backbones from the weather. But they had no idea of preparing it, the skin was stiff and hard. When hunting and on every occasion they used it as a protection, they slept under it and crept behind it when in danger. They did not build themselves houses but slept miserably in

holes on the bare ground or in a bush, and on the approach of winter they started for the south in a body like other birds of passage and did not appear again before next spring. And yet they had always had fire. They carried it about with them in baskets with tinder, exactly as in primitive days, but had made no progress in the use of it. They knew nothing of pottery. Of baking bread they had no idea and never guessed that there was such a thing as corn, though they were wading to the necks in it; the country was full of wild barley. That they should make the corn grow themselves was not to be expected. They did not know how to build boats; on the other hand they could swim and in this way crossed minor water obstacles. They did not throw the spear and only struck the simplest flint flakes.

But to make up for all this the Badgers possessed an implement which was altogether new to White Bear; they knew how to give a flint-tipped reed a long and sure flight through the air by the help of a pair of antelope horns, the points of which were drawn towards each other by a cord of sinew. This was the bow, and how they had come by it they were unable to explain, but they showed with a grin how they caught a poisonous snake and stuck the arrow points into its head to make them powerful, and White Bear shuddered the first time he saw a wild horse fall to one of these arrows and die in convulsions, though it had scarcely received a scratch. This was dirty sorcery. White Bear for his own part never learned the use of the bow.

The boys on the other hand could not take their eyes off it and soon made similar ones, but of ash. The poison they would have nothing to do with, they didn't hunt in ambush, they were strong and in time became so practised that, if the range was not too great, they could shoot an arrow clean through the body of a bison.

Besides the chase the Badgers had another use for the bow; they often sat down and made music by plucking at

the taut string with their fingers. It gave a seductive clang, like the wind playing over distant worlds.

The Badgers were devoted to music, and when one of them struck the bow, the notes of which gained resonance from the empty skull to which the horns were attached, and another thumped a hollow tree with a cudgel, while a third piped with all his might into a shinbone, and at the same time a whole lot more formed a ring round the artists and raised a full passionate chorus of moaning, it was really enough to make the deepest impression, even on others besides the abdominal contortionists who made the music. There was a magic in the way the sweet blending tones made men and even beasts recall and lament the past, a voice from the forest which awoke sleeping memories of the lost Eden.

Originally no doubt the Badgers had only used the lure of their playing in the service of the chase to catch the attention of the game, and then, when the wild horse approached with his head sagaciously on one side and his big down-filled ears cocked to catch the lovely notes that sounded like the wind on distant blissful pastures, then it was that the poison arrow flew from the harp-string and planted the fire of death in the beast's veins. It was an art that paid, the whole soul of primitive man was contained in this instrument, viper and harp in one.

But by long practice the Badgers had acquired such skill that they now cultivated playing as an art independently of hunting. They added more strings to the bow, as it were winds of different force, and gave it deeper resoance by freeing the horns from the empty skull, the teeth of which jarred, and setting them in a tortoise shell instead. The bone flute they provided with holes, that it might have more wounds to bewail; the hollow tree they cut off from its root to make it portable, and they learned to lament with a certain rhythm, whereby misery and regret became a gift. Oh yes, they were masters of music.

White Bear and his family had no talents of this sort, but they were very strongly susceptible and listened in profound ecstasy when the Badgers obliged them with a piece; they fetched deep sighs from their innermost recesses and went red and pale by turns under the influence of their feelings. The music made them meek, they stood as though nailed to the spot, fascinated by the bewitching lure that called them out of themselves.

When they listened in this way, they must have been very like the handsome wild horses which the music inspired with confidence; they bent forward in the same attitude of enchantment, with fetters about their limbs . . . and it was the Badgers' music that won over White Bear and led him to commit himself to their friendship.

Otherwise White Bear did not learn much of the Easterlings. The influence was the other way. The Badgers showed a surprising capacity for imitation, learned in a twinkling how to clothe themselves and boil and drive a sledge and sail on the water and everything that White Bear could do. In fact they assimilated all this so well that it was not long before they began to hint among themselves that they had really been well acquainted with all these simple things beforehand. They were not far from jeering at this Firebeard who gave himself out to be the originator of the most obvious things; luckily it was not *they* who had invented any of them. All the same they never got any further with the new things they had learned until they had gone and pried on White Bear's fingers while he was at work.

Tools and wood bred fast in White Bear's big freckled hands. Nothing remained as it was, but leapt into a more perfect form when he had gone over it with his flashing blue eyes; not a new boat or sledge left his hands that was not different from the last. The Badgers' best efforts at doing a thing well were directed on the other hand to getting it just as it *should* be, the old familiar form, and in

this they went far, they achieved the highest that could be done in the way of jogging along in rear of the obvious.

They transmitted the new things to distant tribes of the primitive folk, who accepted them readily but often stood still for ever at one stage or another, as they came too far away from the source.

White Bear and the Badgers got on well together. They each kept their own customs, and these were pretty different. Thus the Badgers burned their dead, now a symbolical act derived from a past when they roasted and ate them. As though in memory of the ancient custom, the family still ate a little bit of the deceased on the pyre, simply for the sake of honouring the person in question; this however would not be proper if any one should pass away in a totally uneatable condition; but after they had learnt the use of corn from White Bear, they took to making little cakes in the likeness of the dead man, which they ate at the funeral ceremony, and this custom became permanent.

White Bear took no offence at the burning of bodies, though he disliked the smell; he was used to a different custom on the icefield, but did not expect all peoples to be alike. The Ice Folk did not believe in death. Ever since Allfather had gone down into his house and had not been seen again, they used to let those who perished from sickness or old age stay in their graves, which they had inhabited while alive, and give them something to live on, after which the grave was generally closed with earth. Whether they continued to live after that was not for others to determine; at any rate they were given every possible chance.

In daily life also the habits of the Badgers differed radically from White Bear's. The lot of the women was simply miserable. Licentiousness flourished as the most natural thing in the world. Thievery was the only form of lawful property known to the Badgers. They were timorous to a disgusting degree, but very courageous at a distance.

Reverence for superior power was unknown to them, they ran away from the smallest animal but did not hold their peace when Nature spoke; in the dark they were as noisy as a pack of wolves. They squabbled perpetually, blackguarded each other like the dirty wretches they were, but without ever coming to blows.

A proper division between White Bear and the Badgers came about of itself. While White Bear stayed on the coast busy with new big ships, the Badgers came and went on their barren migrations up and down the same tracts, southward when it got too cold and back again with the spring. White Bear received them well when they came, but no closer connection arose. Every spring at the time when White Bear kindled his bonfire and held a sacrificial feast, on which occasion he now slaughtered the wild horse for choice on account of its sweet meat, the Badgers would put in an appearance, old acquaintances who were welcome to a share of the feast and nearly always had news from the outside world. This might lead to a great banquet, followed by musical performances and bartering. The Badgers often brought things with them that White Bear might want, and he on his side had treasures which the Badgers eagerly desired.

One year a wanderer had with him an axe of a strange nature, which White Bear immediately acquired and set to work to investigate. It was of a fine red colour and so bright that you could see your face in it as in water. But the striking thing was that it could not be treated like any other kind of stone, it did not crumble or split up when struck. On the other hand it could be beaten flat, whereby it became warm, and hammered out into another shape again. The stuff was tough but not particularly hard. It had neither taste nor smell and lay very heavily in the hand. It was copper. However, White Bear did not do much with the new stuff in the meanwhile, though he got as much as he could by barter, as May liked to have it to hang

round her neck. For tools it was unsuitable, not nearly hard enough, so flint was better. White Bear owned certain ground chisels and axes which no other stuff could replace; they bit into wood with a greedy tooth and stood all the force he put into the blow.

But afterwards White Bear went more closely into the properties of copper and learned that they were great. It was in working the stuff into ornaments for May that he discovered it would melt in fire. For it got warm when hammered and at the same time a good deal softer; White Bear then tried warming it in the fire, and saw it suddenly run away like a red worm among the embers; he hardly knew what to believe. Afterwards he found it in the ashes, run together and cold, and began with it over again. By degrees it served him for many things. The Badgers said they got it from the tribes far to the south and east, but for the rest they knew nothing of its peculiar qualities as compared with stone; they always brought it beaten into the form of little axes or pins to wear in the cartilage of the nose. Later on White Bear bought little pieces of another somewhat similar stuff from the Badgers, who got it on their travels; it was yellower in colour and still softer, so that it could be used for nothing but beads and earrings for the women. A white metal White Bear also became acquainted with, besides many other things the Badgers carried with them, mussel-shells, pretty stones and the like.

Their intercourse lost the stamp of novelty. The Badgers knew very well that the white men were no more supernatural than themselves. One year one of the tribes stayed through the winter and got on very well, for now they had learnt how to build houses and prepare skins. After that they settled permanently and set about imitating the White Bear family. They showed a certain constancy as far as watching White Bear's work and copying him went. They developed a peculiar sidelong look through always stealing

with their eyes without a word of thanks to the owner.

White Bear let them stay. They supported themselves by fishing, after they had learnt to go to sea. Yet they did not *build* ships, preferring to imitate the dug-out, of which White Bear had also furnished the pattern, since there was big timber here. A trough of this kind could be hollowed out by fire without much trouble and served the needs of the Badgers. And truly it was no longer with abject wonder that they looked at the great masterpiece of a ship that White Bear had under construction on the beach; it rather weighed on them like a burning internal sickness from which they were suffering and which there was only *one* cure for. . . .

White Bear's ship grew. And his plans grew with it. It was to be so big that by itself it would be able to carry him and all his clan to the world's end, right into the Lost Country! His head swam in one fit of frenzy after another as he worked. When he was producing he ran hither and thither in his excitement, his brow brooding hot, his hands congested with blood, his eyes flashing and flashing again; he made himself so wary and deft-fingered, with such intense vision, as he directed the tool, and he cut trees through with *one* blow, went at it like an ox when he had made up his mind what he wanted. He shouted, drunk with victory, over his work when the sun shone, himself a little sun upon the landscape with his fiery red hair and beard, and there were times when in a fury of impatience he smashed up all his work with his biggest hammer, went mad like a bull till there was not a splinter left whole; that was when something had offended him and would not come right at once. Next day he came down to the empty place sober and fresh and ran his fingers through his red hair and began all over again. His sons helped him in everything.

The ship he was building had a keel for the first time. He had forged bolts and nails of copper to hold the timbers together, and as the whole ship would be so big that neither

he nor the boys nor any human power could move it, he had begun by laying the keel on round tree-trunks, taught by previous experience, so as to roll it out when it was finished.

Now the fore-end of the keel, which was to rise up beyond the stem, had already been shaped by White Bear, with the most glowing effort of his craft, into the gaping head of a monster.

What sort of a creature it might be was not altogether easy to see, and White Bear himself was not quite clear about it. But he, whose blood was still haunted by blind memories inherited from forefathers who had seen the foul sea-serpent, now sleeping its eternal sleep at the bottom of the sea, had only imagined some kind of indication of the Impossible created and held fast by his hand, and this gave him the idea. The head might scare off whales, and that was part of its use. Besides, it was to stand looking out to sea while the ship was being built and absorb longing for the lands of wonder that White Bear intended to visit under its sign.

Meanwhile, like the lightning seer he was, White Bear had already started on a new track, even before the ship was finished. It was the steppes and the view to the eastward which never came to an end however far he went inland, it was the infinity of the earth, like that of the sea, which gave him no peace. Would he never come any farther? Was this round horizon over by the rising sun to be his limit? Would the world on that side never be his? What about the wild horses, how was it they could range to the eastward as far as they liked?

Ha! White Bear catches horses and tames them, and the sledge of old days on the ice comes into use again; in winter he tears away on journeys across the endless snow-covered plains. The homestead is in a whirl of horse-breaking, neighing, laughter and shouts. May comes out with bits of bread for the beasts which she gives them on

the flat of her palm lest they should nab her fingers in their greediness, and the horses pick up the crumbs with their soft flexible muzzles. And when it is all gone she dries the foam on the animals' manes and smiles at them when they follow her, sniffing at her hands. White Bear makes a cunning whip with a lash that whirs in the air and stings just like a gadfly; that makes the horses jump and throw their heads about. He and the boys go on the Wild Hunt over the steppes.

The dear wild horses are more than ready to run, they set off on full gallop before the sledge in the impetuous belief that all the time they are running away from the sledge and their captivity, which is just what they have to do; behind them sits White Bear roaring with laughter and is carried on with them, the horses' flight is what he has use for.

But in summer White Bear can't get anywhere with his sledge. He ponders.

He ponders again. Look here—those rollers he uses for running his boats into the sea . . . what if he made fast a round block of wood under the sledge so that it came along and went on rolling under the runners all the time? White Bear couldn't get the roller out of his head. He tried, fastened thongs to both ends of a thick block of wood and hung it under the sledge; but the thongs caught and wouldn't let the roller go round. There was no need for it to touch the ground in its whole length either; White Bear hacked it thin except at the ends and then actually got it to hang on, but it was like nothing at all until he gave up the thongs and made holes in the runners themselves through which to put the thin part of the roller. Now the sledge was really fit to run on the bare ground. But the round wooden discs at the ends had to be made bigger, taken from thicker trunks, and it was a long job to hack them thin in the middle; why not make a pole fast to the sledge and bore holes through the discs themselves?

White Bear's hair tingled at the thought, he got the carpentry done, and then, after many summers' laborious attempts and endless hacking with his stone axe, he saw himself in possession of the first car.

Now in with the horses! White Bear fetches a pair, and you can guess they turn the whites of their eyes at the sight of this contraption with two possibly very fateful wheels underneath it. They hum and haw and quiver a trifle, get ready for a gallop to the world's end, if need be, for freedom; and let them do it, thinks White Bear, but they are to stand still till they have got the leather traces on; a little taste of them along their flanks makes them both willing to have them on and more eager for liberty, thus serving White Bear's purpose. A stag's antler bit in the mouth to foam over—away from their heads, boys, and the happy White Bear is off. . . .

Not two minutes after he had fire!

Yes, as true as the sun circles in the sky! White Bear was run away with on the spot, the wheels, wood against wood on the axles, began to smoke almost as soon as the car started, and the horses, who thought it was a steppe fire they smelt, set off at a tearing gallop. The smoke streamed from both hubs, began to shoot out sparks, and suddenly the wheels burst into flame, the whole car was ablaze about White Bear's ears. Then all the Badgers, who had stolen up to look on, fell on their faces and twiddled their hands above their heads in the deepest misery—surely the Mighty One would not let them die!

But they recovered themselves and nearly smacked their thighs to pieces with fun when they saw the end of the show. White Bear was upset, and the horses, now clean mad, broke everything and ran off; and there lay White Bear battling with the fire amid the remains of his smashed car. He got hair and beard singed off and was well burnt all over, but he noticed nothing, not even the Badgers who came and roared with laughter in his face; he laughed

heartily himself, with wide eyes staring from terror and delight, he swung a bit of the burning car over his head and howled with crazy joy. *Fire!* He rushed off home to his workshop to start making it all over again—and suddenly he fell silent as he ran; now his head was going again, he was working!

Behind him cackled the savage laughter of the flat-footed, blighted folk who could see nothing in it but that the man had had a spill and got singed.

And after this they permitted themselves to grin more and more openly when White Bear was out driving his car like a headstrong fool; they stood in line and laughed in good faith, held their breath with polite interest; but they let themselves go like frisky swine with delight at the Thunderhead's doings. For when White Bear drove fast the car rumbled pretty loudly, especially as the wheels were not properly round, and as fire had broken out on the first trial run the Badgers had really believed it was the *Thunderer* himself they had amongst them and had cast themselves on the ground before him. That was a blunder he would have to pay for! Behind their laughter lay a corroding malice, a hatred that only the heart of a thief can hold. They had generosity to avenge.

But White Bear did not see what was gathering against him. He was entirely taken up by his car. He straightway built himself a new one and prevented its catching fire by pouring water on the wheels; one of his sons sat in the car by him with a pot and kept the axles wet, and this answered the purpose until he had tried other ways and learned to smear his car with grease and tallow. He improved the wheels; discs cut crosswise from a tree-trunk would not last and it was an inhuman labour to hack them out; he laid two strong pieces of wood together in the form of a cross and made the hub in the middle; outside this he bent a strong ash shoot of the thickness of a wrist all the way round and lashed it together with pigskin

thongs. He protected the lashing by laying another band of ash outside to take the wear and tear, and now the wheel could hardly be better. He prolonged the hub so that the wheel should not work loose. The car itself he also improved, giving it a pole to harness the horses to and splinterbars for the traces.

But now White Bear knew that he need only drive with ungreased wheels to get fire. And thus fire had come to White Bear, as to his ancestor Carl, through the work of his hands.

The art of making fire he afterwards pursued in a special way. He made himself a wheel and axle for the purpose, only reversing the movement so that he turned the axle while the wheel lay still. Experience showed him that the axle was best made of ash and the hub of elm. Thus he had the means of renewing his fire whenever he wanted it.

And as this wheel was not to be used for driving, he left out the band and only left the spokes with a hook at each end to make it fast by. This instrument afterwards became a secret sign for all members of Carl's race, when they had spread over the earth; a solar symbol to which all kinds of incomprehensible meanings were attached; but the only secret of the sign was perseverance and fire, labour first and last.

Now White Bear had thoughts of leaving. The ship would soon be ready, and it was a big one. It was to hold the car and several pairs of horses—aha! for there would be driving in the land beyond the sea.

And the ship was to be victualled with corn for weeks, the country was far away. White Bear himself helped May to grow corn. He watched her scratching the ground with a stick to open the mould for the grain, and he came at once and beamed over the field, gave the stick form and harnessed an ox to it, so that May's strength was spared. One more crop and they would be off.

## XVI

### THE VOICE OF THE BLOOD

THE great year of departure arrived and the ship lay ready with her dragon's jaws gaping hungrily out to sea.

White Bear had burnt his joy fire for the year and hoped to light the next one in new realms. But May sighed this time as she laid her corn in the earth; she knew she would not reap it. But she sowed it, for the earth which had been the first to give should be the last to receive.

The Badgers had come with the birds of passage and had been liberally entertained with horseflesh at the spring bonfire. White Bear sacrificed to Sun, Moon, Sea and Earth in view of his approaching voyage. There was great feasting, at which the Badgers contributed the most affecting concerts. The harp twanged confusedly like storms coming from every quarter, the drums throbbed like a heart overwhelmed by sadness, and the bone flute puled so sorely; The Lost Country was nigh. Between the numbers the Badgers who lived on the spot had much to tell their friends returned from travel, they put their heads together and whispered all sorts of things into each other's ears; White Bear was glowing with the music and saw nothing.

Having the impression of a certain melancholy on the part of his guests he went driving in his wonderful new car; perhaps it would cheer them up to see him manage the horses and thunder about on the steppe. White Bear's flashing eyes, which usually saw everything, did not discover that the Badgers were shortening their necks with suppressed

rage, he did not hear them grind their teeth behind closed lips, speechless at his rashness.

It offended the Badgers in their very souls to have to witness this madman's speed. It was dangerous if not fatal simply to see the wheels whirl round so furiously that they were quite invisible, rumbling in a way that was more than insulting to the Thunderer himself and a scandal for folk to listen to. Were people no longer allowed to walk on their feet?

What would be the next thing? And what idea of himself had this foreigner with hair that had gone light from sickness, since in his indomitable insolence he persisted in dazzling the world with fatuous devices? Were old ways not good enough for him? Would he perforce make himself different from other people? And yet he had himself shown that he was nothing more than an ordinary man by mixing with them as an equal.

But they had let him exploit them; all the copper he used for his ship and had now mounted on the wheels of his cursed car, had originally hung on their necks or in their noses, it was green with their sweat and properly belonged to them. And then that thing he had said. . . .

White Bear had said something which more than all the rest had driven the Badgers' bile into their blood and given them yellow eyes. It was only just a chance remark White Bear had carelessly let fall and forgotten again, but it had affected the natives as a deadly insult, a piece of spiritual coarseness never to be forgiven.

On an occasion when several Badgers were listening he had said, expressly intending to give them a cut of the lash, that it was after all a lucky thing it had occurred to him at the start to propel a ship end on, otherwise they might have seen people sailing broadside foremost to the end of time.

That was what he had said, and it was a heartless thing. The Badgers discussed nothing else at White Bear's feasts,

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while pouring out their whole souls in music and song, which threw White Bear off his guard.

A day or two after the bonfire White Bear made a trip inland after game. Some supplies still wanting for the ship, and the Badgers had brought word of a great herd of buffaloes wandering in such and such a direction inland. They had advised him to go in a body, and White Bear had taken his four elder sons with him; they were on horseback, and he himself drove the car.

Later in the day, when White Bear had been gone some hours, the Badgers came creeping up to the settlement from different sides, surrounding it and hid themselves, while three or four of them went openly towards White Bear's house.

May was at home with her three daughters, the youngest of whom was still a little child, and a half-grown boy called Worm. To him the Badgers addressed themselves, and they talked for a while of this and that. Worm knew them well, they were in the habit of coming to the settlement and asking favours of White Bear. This time they only wanted to borrow a clay pot, and as Worm turned his back to fetch one, they threw straps about his arms and legs and pulled him down. Worm defended himself desperately and nearly struggled free, but more Badgers came to help and Worm was overpowered.

The confusion brought May out with the little girl. The two grown-up daughters stayed below in the stone house. Not a word was spoken between May and the Badgers, but when she had looked round at them and seen Worm lying bound, she took up a heavy piece of wood, lifted the little girl up on her arm and began the fight for her life and the children's. She fought as long as she could see, raging like a she-bear, till she could feel no more.

The settlement was thick with Badgers, whole armies of them had swarmed up from the grass and undergrowth, they were so many that they pressed each other backwards and

forwards like a tideway, they swayed in and out, almost too numerous to get anything done. But that came after a while. Some of them made for the ship, others split White Bear's sledges to pieces and killed the domestic animals. The daughters were brought up shrieking from the house, but soon their cries were stifled by skins thrown over their heads and died away as they were carried off.

One group took Worm and led him to a tree to be tortured. They looked at him with eyes ready to burst with rapacity, they foamed and bristled like beasts at night, they blew and snorted and twitched spasmodically. They were past speaking, their jaws were stiff with cramp and set in a cold grin, and Worm's voice sounded so lonely and abandoned among all these men. He had much to say, words enough for a lifetime which he had to pour out all at once. He kept his grave voice, the rough voice of a growing boy, even when they were maltreating him.

When he could not help trembling, standing naked before his tormentors, he remarked to them that his limbs seemed displeased at having to lose their power. It worried him to be hustled by the crowd, and he turned up his nose at the sweat and stench they smothered him with. They wanted to make him complain and fetched brands to put to his feet, they broke his fingers with a cudgel; he stretched himself but said nothing. He was of a sort that did not yield in adversity. After a while he made a remark about the weather. Then they set to work to torture the boy in earnest, thoroughly, bit by bit. And so they made him cry.

Far out upon the steppe White Bear saw smoke and knew that it could come from nowhere but his own homestead; he wondered at it, stopped the hunt and turned back. The smoke increased, he saw flames at the root of it, and now he hastened on, making for home as hard as the horses could go. He reached a hill from which there was a view of the coast, and saw it was his *ship* that was on fire.

Between him and home lay a dense birch copse, and from this a numberless swarm of Badgers suddenly burst and rushed towards White Bear and his sons yelling with all their might. But even before they were within bowshot the sight of the giant with his stone hammer coming at a thundering gallop in his car unmanned them, and the whole swarm turned their backs all at once like a flock of sandpipers and fled back to the thicket. Their little plan of campaign was stifled at birth. White Bear did not see a single one the rest of the way during the final wild race to the settlement.

Nor were there any Badgers to be seen here. But their tracks showed that they had only taken to flight a very short time before. White Bear only gave a brief glance at his ship; it was enveloped in flames and destroyed, the charred dragon's head gaping to seaward; outside his house White Bear saw things that were worse. Here they had spent at least an hour amusing themselves at their ease, the whole settlement was bespattered with blood.

May, May was dead. In her arms she held the unrecognizable body of the little girl. Both the big girls were gone.

But dying and bound to a tree White Bear found his son Worm. He was resting with his head upon his shoulder, but raised his pale face when his father came and smiled at him. There was a faint trace of tears on the freckled boyish cheeks under the eyes, which were half closed and dim; he could not see but still moved his blue lips, trying to say something.

They had cut his back open and torn the lungs from his living body.

Once more he moved his lips, and White Bear bent down his ear and heard his boy whisper that he was all right. And then he laid his head upon his breast and was dead.

In the light northern nights the birch stands with all its rich foliage hanging down over the rounded stems,

which glimmer in a twilight of white flecked limbs; the whole delicate tree trembles like a woman whose long hair has fallen forward over her face; and the northern sky, which smiles and blushes with the sleeping sun in its embrace, knows not whether the birch has hidden its face because it is quivering with happiness or because it is weeping. Ah, the birch hangs its light young leaves in deep sorrow, since it has dreamt that its foliage will be turned to a crown of bloody hair, each leaf a bleeding wound, until it is swathed naked in the snowstorm's winding-sheet. The tree that quivers under the sympathy of the lovely northern night is May, the gentle May.

But the great white Star that wanders ceaselessly about the sky while all other stars have come to rest and twinkle in one place, the star that does not sparkle but hangs calmly and hard like a boy's tears, that is Worm who died too early. How he shines in his pallor as he pursues his course, which was broken off before he had lived; how he wanders eternally about the earth with his fine, defiant heart!

And the little girl who was killed on her mother's breast shines now as evening, now as morning star, white and pensive like a child's soul full of its own affairs and playing so happily by itself on paths of infinity.

## XVII

### THE SIGN OF THE HAMMER

BUT as the dark sea of blood where the sun sinks at midnight, as the long black nights of the North was White Bear's suffering.

Ages passed before his spirit dawned again, and all the while the darkness lay upon his soul he raged as a terrible avenger. The steppe was swept by a storm of slaughter and burning, White Bear thundered far and wide in his car, which had become death's vehicle, accompanied by his darting sons on horseback, and wherever he passed the Badgers writhed stricken in his tracks. He swung the great stone hammer which before had done him peaceful service in shipbuilding; it did not stick in the wound like an axe, but crashed down and was free again in his hand as he hunted on; up and down it went and the Badgers sank back dead behind the whirling wheels. White Bear laid waste the country for leagues, burned the Badgers out of the undergrowth with fire and exterminated them in masses. Every sort of wood or cover was laid in ashes, the steppes lay scorched and blackened as far as the eye could see. It was like a visitation of winter over the whole earth, not a blade of grass was spared. The Badgers were swept away like the leaves of the trees in a ravaging frost wind.

But slaughter and reprisal could not in the long run expiate the deed. White Bear's eyes were not sated by watching the death shudder flicker across the faces of the wretches he had doomed, but who did not even know what they had done. He saw that the Badgers had acted in pro-

found ignorance, they had only followed their nature, and it was he who had been most to blame for not guarding himself against it. He had been as one who releases a wolf caught in the forest and instantly has the brute at his throat. They were jungle creatures who were incapable of thought and had not learned to remember. The outrage had been committed without a scrap of reason, as an urgent momentary impulse, and now they had actually forgotten their guilt and looked upon the whole affair as though it was he who had begun it and had been butchering them in his fury for all eternity. An inarticulate hate was the only feeling that filled them; they did not even know what it was to die, though they were cowardly enough; he looked into eyes that returned nothing but blank hate when he marked them for death, nothing but the momentary guiltlessness of the animal, until his hammer scattered their brains upon the ground. At last he could strike no more. They were the many. They must be right.

And another thing helped, which seemed stronger than White Bear. Far to the eastward he at last came up with the band that had run away with his two grown-up daughters. Instantly the sky turned red before him, revenge and slaughter were in the air—when White Bear witnessed the sight of his and May's white-armed girls, his own flesh and blood, falling at his feet and interceding for the ravishers who had violated them and carried them off. Then White Bear wept and gave them peace.

He gave up his reprisals and turned home, sat for months inert, dumbly lamenting like the forest in autumn. His hair turned white. But the man's designs and constructive passion came back. At last he had thought it all out and decided his fate and that of the Badgers.

May and the two children lay in the house White Bear had lived in! he threw on earth and raised a great mound over it. He himself left the place and camped on the coast in a forest of big timber farther to the south. Here

he built a new ship. It was of such vast beam and length that the Badgers, who had begun again shyly to draw near to his settlement, puzzled their heads a good deal as to how White Bear would get such a big ship to move on the water. White Bear set up a dragon's head on the stem with gulping jaw to seaward, and it seemed to laugh with a silent uncanny laughter.

But when the ship was finished and afloat with thwarts for twenty men besides White Bear and his sons, he went ashore one day and caught that number of Badgers, strong young men, and brought them bound to the vessel. For every seat he had made a copper shackle and this he attached to the foot of each of his captives. They expected to be put to death. But White Bear gave them food and looked after them so well that they cast down their eyes. Then he told them to take hold of the oars and row. And now they saw how White Bear had thought of moving his ship.

Afterwards, when they grew homesick and drew distant comparisons between their dog's life on the steppe and their present altogether carefree and regular employment, with sighs for the past and detriment to their working powers, White Bear cheered them by remarking on their muscular strength and suggesting that it would soon be supper time; they were immensely vain of the strong arms they developed at the oars and showed all their teeth in a pleased grin when White Bear praised them; supper was also a fine object for a little extra exertion, another hour or so every day. The Badgers made good rowers. They lacked nothing; White Bear took a number of their women on board in the bottom of the ship, to make them feel at home and to add to the crew during the voyage, if it should be necessary.

Besides them White Bear brought everything pertaining to his life on board this roomy ship, his cars, horses and cattle with their hay and corn, and all he possessed in the

way of skins and tools, copper and weapons. On a hearth in the after part of the ship burned the fire, which White Bear had the power to extinguish and rekindle whenever he chose. The order of the ship was that White Bear stood at the great after-oar and steered while the captives rowed; his sons lived in the forepart and looked out for land, always playing with weapons in their hands. Thus they stood out to sea.

And this ship with all that was assembled in it, with all that it *was*, now moved with the wind and the currents and its own indwelling force like a little living island, a type of that growth of power in adversity and its consequences, which transplanted itself from the ice-sheet over Europe, and later expanded over every sea into what became in time the white man's social order.

But White Bear's eldest son, Wolf, stayed behind in Lifeland. He had taken one of the daughters of the Badgers to wife, a twinkling brown girl of the steppes, and wished to remain in the country and share his lot with her. From them and from White Bear's two white daughters who had native husbands was descended a great people who ranged over the East and South in chariot and on horseback.

White Bear sailed so long under the North Star that he grew homesick for Upland, where he had lived the best days of his life in longing to get away. He felt he must see the place where May's first yellow cornfield had waved in the summer breeze like her own rich hair. And he found his way by steering by the burning mountain, whose smoke marked his course by day, while the glow of its summit against the sky guided him by night.

In Upland White Bear settled. The waters from the melting of the ice-sheet had long since fallen, and the land was fair with greensward and young trees which clothed the moist banks of gravel and the furrowed hills. The deep cauldrons which the ice in many places had left in the rocky soil were full to the brim with clear water, so

that you could see the pebbles that had been churned round lying still at the bottom and collecting moss; little water-newts with mottled bellies lived here as though there had never been another world. But even on warm summer days a breath cold as the grave might strike the face, coming from century-old ice that still lay in some cleft facing north under a protecting bed of gravel.

The forest was full of beasts which looked out from their secret paths among the trees with eternity in their eyes, as though they had always been here. The spruce sweated resin in the midday heat with a scent of the days when it was a tropical tree. Aspen, birch and mountain ash whispered together, beckoning significantly with their leaves, of the Lost Country. *Just below here*, they said and shook their heads, all-knowing. But in the thickets was the scent of raspberries with a new, finer sweetness than any forest had known before, the rich concealed intensity of the northern summer.

The bees hummed busily and gathered honey from flowers that only lived the summer through but drank up a condensed soul from a mould ground by the glacier out of the primeval forces of the mountain's heart, bared and enriched by all the moist whims of heaven, frost, rain and sunshine. Lichen and moss clothed the naked, scored rock, brought by the winds of heaven; birds of passage flew over the country with seed, or it was brought as motes sailing upon September gales from over the sea, and the land put on its new green garment.

In every crevice of the hard rock was a grass or a tiny flower with spicy scent. And in every calyx the gasping bee tumbled like a furry little elf, and the flower nodded and nodded again when he had flown away, smoothed out her skirt and blinked on at the sun.

White Bear brewed himself a drink of honey, which went dizzily to his head, as though he were spying upon a love-tryst between the sun and the nakedly fragrant

herbs of a southern slope. When, drunk with mead and warmed through from lying on a slab of sun-baked rock, he looked up at the swarm of bees hanging before the sun like a great hovering globe swelling and shrinking in its heat and spinning like a fiery song in the sky—then the Lost Country returned, with a world to boot. At last White Bear found where he came from.

He let the years go by. He looked round the Upland forests after timber for shipbuilding. The trees were but young, of no use yet; but here would be forests for his successors, enough for fleets, for hosts of ships. The young smooth-barked trees were already swaying as though they knew they were to grow into keels that would sail the farthest seas.

For himself White Bear felt glad to settle and had his ship hauled up on land. He canted it keel upwards and built underneath it for a hall; and this was the first Gothic building. Afterwards, when White Bear's descendants found a new land and settled it, they turned their ships into halls and travelled on under the vaulting in another, spiritual sense.

White Bear went up to the island that had lain enclosed by the icefield and found his people again. Many of the Sons of Carl had perished in the thaw, but the rest were living in exactly the same state as when White Bear was outlawed. Now he came driving back, with his hammer and his fire and his ships behind him on the coast, and his kinsmen, who still remembered him, repented of the old story.

White Bear deposed the Garmings. He ordered the Ice Folk to disperse. There they were living on an island, which had long ceased to be an island, with the whole world open on every side but without a man to show them that the limit only existed in themselves; White Bear showed them that.

And lest they should continue to crowd round Allfather's

Grave, White Bear took authority to gather them about a new sign, the fire-bearing Wheel. But he placed the sanctuary in Upland, with the open sea for a boundary on one side. He instituted great sacrifices to the returning Sun in spring, in whose fire he charged the Ice Folk to worship the One-Eyed Ancient. The young men he bade travel, as he had done, but he himself now stayed at home and founded a realm whose spirit should inspire the young, that they might remember where they came from and carry white man's customs with them into foreign lands.

The Ice Folk then gathered round White Bear under the sign of the Fire Wheel and the Hammer. Many of them crossed the mountains, now that they were freed, and founded Norway; others settled on the coast with White Bear and learned agriculture. Later on the young men made their way to Britain, Denmark and Germany, the Mediterranean; they made the waters round Europe their country, spread abroad but held together.

In the last years of his old age White Bear was much occupied in following the course of the heavenly bodies. He became more skilled in the days of the year and more intimate with the stars than any before him, and he bequeathed his knowledge to his sons. It was to be their secret and no other man's to be able to foretell the sun's position throughout the seasons and advise the people accordingly.

Otherwise White Bear did nothing to strengthen his power by dark and hidden lore, so long as he kept his bodily strength. The art of making fire, as he had introduced it, was known and in the possession of all; he would not have it used to any man's subjection. But he caused the Fire Wheel to be holy in the hand of every man as a sign of everlasting gratitude to the earth and the sun and a symbol of fertility. His influence White Bear maintained in his own way, by the Hammer and his almighty hand.

In a leisure hour White Bear composed the story of his

life and engraved it for ever in the earth itself, a slab of bed-rock which the ice had worn smooth, the first tablet; the narrative consisted of two signs, whereof one was to represent a ship and the other a wheel. That was the beginning of art and literature.

As long as he could use his eyes White Bear continued to work in wood and metal. He kept affectionately to his stone implements that fitted his hand so capitally, but in leisure moments his curiosity was busy with the copper and other new things his sons brought home from the East; he tried everything in the fire and observed the nature of the stuff. On one of his visits Wolf brought home a big lump of an extraordinary new metal from the East, which he laid in the old man's hand; and this was long before even copper had come into general use. White Bear held the lump at arm's length and examined it carefully, weighed it and felt it all over with his big, scarred fingers. It was of a cold bluish lustre, something like ice, very heavy; a stone made no mark on it. White Bear put it to his tongue, it tasted bitter and raw like the sea; he sniffed at it, it smelt like blood. Then White Bear fell into deep thought. It was iron.

From that piece of iron White Bear forged himself a hammer, deserting his old tried stone implement for the first time. He was still so strong that with one blow of the iron hammer he could stretch a horse dead on the spot before the stone of sacrifice, and that without leaving a whole splinter in its skull.

Now when the wisdom of old age came to him he saw that the people would insist on submitting to his power, even when it was no more; and this insight into the nature of the heart of man once more gave work for his cunning hands.

White Bear lived almost entirely inside the hall, which was somewhat gloomy, and here men were accustomed to see a glimpse of his great frame and to show him the

respect due to him and his Hammer. White Bear now privily shaped a block of wood into something of his own likeness, gave it his Hammer in its hand and set it up in the murky background of the hall, where he was used to show himself. And he actually had the satisfaction of seeing that the people bowed just as reverently to the image as to the reality. Then the old man laughed in his white beard, tickled with pride at the work of his hands—and at the same time by another masterthought of cruel merriment. Then he yielded himself to repose.

But afterwards, when he no longer showed himself outside the sanctuary, they could still catch a glimpse of him in the inner twilight with his Hammer raised; and his son, the only initiate, sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices upon him and gave the folk greetings from the old skipper-charioteer.

White Bear, who had been more human than any before or after him, was worshipped as a god by the Northerners and received affectionate surnames—the Thunderer, the Hammerswinger, the Truthteller—and he was given a place in the heavens by the side of the One-eyed Ancient. But their living blood flowed in the veins of the race. From Carl, who could not yield in adversity, and his posterity through White Bear, father of open fight, are descended all kings and husbandmen.

The Northern folk advanced in agriculture and seafaring. They fetched thralls from the eastward and lived together with them for hundreds of years. In the course of ages they became crossed and blended into one people, but a border-line always persisted, although they came from the same root, the line drawn by the ice, a fundamental difference in their stages of development. There were those who once for all had the lead, and whose fate it was always to drag their past about with them; and there were those who were burdened for ever by the impossibility of overtaking others, to imitate whom

was their one desire. Of freemen and bondsmen and their mixed offspring, labourers under the yoke with the souls of freemen, as well as severe masters with the spirit of thralls, the population of the North and of the countries to which it spread was made up for ever after.

But when White Bear had got his substitute well set up, he yearned for solitude. One night he left the hall and secretly went on board a ship which he let drift away from land. He was oppressed with age and longed to lay his bones in the sea. Out in the open sea he sat quite still and looked at his hands, while the ship rocked broadside on to the waves. Time no longer existed for him.

Dawn came, his friend the sun arose. Broad and red it sank again into the sea.

The moon passed over the heavens with May's gentle, lifeless features.

The little dead girl came out in the morning sky and looked down, shining quietly till she too paled away.

Then he closed his eyes and saw no more.

## XVIII

### WOLF THE HORSEBREAKER

WHITE BEAR was the first to sail on the water in a ship, he tamed horses and invented the chariot, but, as has already been related, White Bear's adventurous boys were the first on earth to *ride*.

It was not for the old man to trust his heavy frame to the bucking wild horse to the extent of climbing on its back; there was a certain fatherly dignity to be thought of too. White Bear was content to develop his powers as a charioteer. Nor, though a mighty skipper, had he learned to swim, whereas the boys had taken to the water from sheer curiosity and daring and had risked drowning so often that at last they swam like seals. The fact was they were restless creatures and had to be on the go, up and down, in and out, wherever there was a chance. Many things that they started as purely thoughtless pranks afterwards stuck and became permanent acquirements, part of the everyday life both of themselves and their successors. They learned horsemanship in the same way, through play and passion for novelty, and above all through the necessity of constantly risking their necks which seems to be essential to every boy. It came about in this way:

Behind White Bear's settlement on the coast of Life-land the steppes began and stretched eastward to infinity, so far that nobody had ever seen their boundary, right away to the place of the sun's rising. The country was fairly level and clothed league after league with high grass, but in the coastal district and many other places

inland there were young forests of birch and stretches of thick scrub, besides bogs with bushes and reeds. Game roamed everywhere, bears and deer, aurochs, wolves and wild cattle living as neighbours; the sea was full of fish, and farther north, where the steppe passed into endless frozen marshes and hills, the reindeer dwelt in countless herds; in winter they came south and at that season supplied all the needs of White Bear and his household. But in the summer the wild horses came in from the warm pastures in the south and roamed over the open steppes and in the glades of the bush; then *they* were the quarry and daily fattened the smoke of May's kitchen fire with their sweet flesh. The wild horse tasted so good that White Bear preferred it to all other animals as an offering to the distant Powers he honoured; every year he had his days of mark when more than one of the handsome refractory animals was led to the pyre and sacrificed.

But he also domesticated the wild horse, partly as a good food reserve which might be left alive against a shortage of game, partly of course for use in his car and sledge. This latter the horses did not seem to object to, and thus a mutual confidence soon grew up between them and White Bear.

But the boys especially had more and more to do with the spirited animals. Wolf, the eldest, was quite irresistibly attracted by them, and it looked as if they on their side were willing to make a special friend of him.

A secret sympathy arose between horse and man, a feeling of kinship that seemed to belong to a very distant past, forgotten on both sides. Perhaps it was due to the horse having once been a primitive animal in the same period when man's ancestors still lived in the trees, so that the obscure memory that linked them together dated from the Lost Country.

While the jungle man, in the days before Time came into the world, hooked himself from branch to branch in

the tropical forests of Northern Europe, the primitive horse padded about down below on the hot swampy ground as a beast of just about the size of a rabbit, with four well-developed toes adapted for spreading themselves over the mud and with a mouthpiece that craved for water-plants and fruit; a plump little animal that might be something between a rodent and a ruminant, half-way to becoming a lazy tapir but possessed by an ambition to follow the distinguished career of the okapi and peaceful enough to join the herds of antelopes. Here in Paradise, the eternal springtime of the forests, the jungle man must often have dropped a juicy fruit to the beast in the swamp below, which devoured it in good faith as a gift from on high. Cocoanuts on the head it received from those above, but also the goodly breadfruit—the primeval horse was fond of that. Later on, when the tree-dwellers found themselves entitled to descend to earth and in that connection took to eating flesh, the little, widespread, easily caught swamp horse became their favourite food; that was the origin of *their* warm feelings.

Afterwards, when the ice came and overwhelmed the forests, they parted; the jungle man entered upon the inclement existence, under the law of the icefield, which made him human, and the horse went his way, which in course of time and in a literal sense was not without influence on his toes. Instead of the soft forest floor and the secure hiding places of the jungle, he came out upon dry steppes, where there was no need to spread his toes to prevent sinking in, but where on the contrary they were a hindrance, when for thousands of years he had to run for his life with packs of wolves and other hungry beasts of prey at his heels. Instead of plantain and young bamboo shoots he had nothing to live on but grass. But better to change little by little than give way to bad times. The horse had to travel long distances every day, and that quickly, so he raised himself on his middle toe and it

gave him a feeling of greater freedom, of being more in alliance with the wind; and as the other side toes were not used, they shrank and became superfluous, while the nail hardened into a hoof; thus time and the road turned a fugitive beast into a horse. And it thrived so well that the puny creature of the forest floor gradually rose into an animal of size, one of those that are seen at a distance.

Its youthful dreams of subsiding into a tapir or a ruminant vanished of course together with the Lost Country. This beast of many possibilities, then, had now become a horse with no chance of retreat nor any desire of it; no more rabbit existence for him, he was a horse right through. And now it had met man again and felt strangely affected by an ancient memory, inexplicably attracted—but at the same time instinctively warned. There was something in man's gestures which promised fairly, and then the horse through all its trials had preserved the sweetness of Paradise in its blood, the great curiosity, it was so ready to come on. But a rather uncanny light in man's eye, something like the taste of an old and much-loved friend and a newly awakened appetite, could but induce the horse to keep at a suitable distance.

Such was the position when the boys made the acquaintance of the wild horse. Their closer relations began in the neighbourhood of the settlement, where White Bear kept the half-tamed horses he had caught for driving. They ran loose in a big paddock, a sort of island that White Bear had contrived by digging a ditch on the fourth side of a pasture which was naturally surrounded on three sides by water. Here the horses lived just as in a free state, there was open ground and trees where they could roam about or stand in shelter as they pleased. Every time they had to be brought to the settlement to be harnessed it was a case of catching them over again, and as the enclosure was so big this gave rise to many skirmishes and much strategy on both sides.

It was the boys' task to fetch the horses, and if they could not succeed in any other way in getting near enough to throw the leather noose about their neck, they would entice them with a bunch of tempting grass or a particularly succulent root, or perhaps even a bit of bread Mother had given them for the dear horses, and when they couldn't resist any longer and let the boys come near—then hey! catch hold of his forelock, out with the halter and slip it over his head, and the dainty one was caught.

Now it was no little way from the paddock home to the settlement, and the boys, who naturally wanted to get out of the tramp when there were others to do it for them, often coolly tried to jump up on the horses so as to be carried home instead of trudging by their side. This the horses invariably took in very bad part. The halter one could put up with, if there was no way out of it, and a good-natured pat on the muzzle might also pass; nor need one object to sniffling up to one of these humans now and then and tripping a dance round him, for company's sake and three paces off—but to be clawed by the mane and mounted like a tree, to have this biped on one's back! Every time the boys attempted it you could see the offended horse spring straight up into the air with all four feet to send him to the stars, and if he actually kept his seat, then, a vertical rear with the hindquarters and the next instant up with the forelegs the same way, and if this pitching didn't make him seasick, then a wild jump to one side and up with the back in an arch that nobody *could* hang on to; but if he stuck on all the same, as Wolf did more and more often, why then there was nothing for it but to fling yourself down like a dog and roll on the ground, or a heap of stones for choice, with all four legs in the air, to get rid of the vermin; or it might be necessary to rush at full gallop for a tree with a low bough that would scrape him off—in short, it was not to be thought of that the horse would tolerate a man

on his inviolable back. The inherited experience of generations, the bloody consequences of getting anything on one's back—the *lynx*, the *wolverine*—made the horse blindly resist the slightest advances of that kind.

And then, in spite of this, May witnessed one day from the door of her house a half terrifying, half ridiculous performance in which Wolf played the chief part, sitting redhaired and glorious on the back of one of the horses on the way home from the paddock—dreadful boy! The other brothers were decorously leading theirs by the halter, but Wolf sat astride his horse with his legs proudly dangling in the air and guided it with a strap on its neck. And the horse seemed to submit with a good grace, it walked with its head down, pondering deeply, as though it had an inkling of the bearing of this first complaisance, but without any attempt at revolt. Cheers and great reception of the boys! Even White Bear, who was ardently engaged on his new ship, looked up from his flint wedge and cast a fatherly eye upon his offspring, shook his head in thoughtful approval; he knew what might result from heresies. He himself had made his way by doing the impossible. The boys might well behave a little differently from just what one had expected of them.

Wolf had at last achieved it. The stallion he rode had been his friend from a foal. It was born in captivity and reared in the paddock, looked after and petted by Wolf with all the good things he could get hold of and spare for it; it knew him from any of the others and liked being taken round the neck and patted by him, even after it was grown up. True, its innate shyness lay so deep in its blood that it was ready to start off all the time as though possessed by a thousand promptings of flight, quivering in every joint and with wide, fleeting eyes; its ears twitched nervously, lay back flat while its teeth showed in an ugly grin; its nostrils stretched so that daylight gleamed through the rosy cartilage between them; it

wanted to be patted and yet did not want it, swung its flank forward and drew back ticklishly, as though it was fire it felt and not a human hand, its mood shifted like a breeze on the water; only after a long, long time of tireless overtures would it accept the relationship, but really *tame* it never was.

Only Wolf could approach it. He came so calmly, controlling every single step, and put out his hand so cautiously, lest its limbs should be seized with instinctive flight; and when he had once come up to it he took care never to make the slightest unexpected movement or do anything suddenly, which would have sent it off with stones and turf flying from its hoofs. The wild horse itself always stood perfectly still when it was not grazing or actually on the move; when at rest it stood straight up with its head out without moving so much as an ear; even at a short distance it was not easily sighted in the field before it moved; that was its protection against pursuit; moreover it is only ignoble animals that always have to be fidgetting and cannot be restful in themselves when there is no real need for exertion.

When the horse stood like this, probably under a birch if the sun was shining, Wolf would approach it with every sign of profound calm in his gait, and then it stood still and awaited his coming. Wolf might then take it round the neck and stay talking to it a long while, with his hand laid against its fine skin; and the horse did not move a hoof, nor tremble, only now and again it threw up its head as though it didn't want to hear a word more; but it stayed with Wolf, and he patted it here and there, stroked it and made it feel safe all over, until every fibre, every hair of its body, which had been timid at first, was calmed down by gradually being accustomed to the strange touch.

And Wolf was clever. With his experience of the others which had never allowed themselves to be tamed, because he had taken them by surprise, and had only become more

unmanageable, he was wary of attempting to jump on the back of his friend; it was not to know *when* he sat there. He began by leaning against the horse's flank and laying an arm across the handsome, faintly striped back, just casually as it were, and yet the first few times the horse received his arm with a tremble. Later, when after long and patient repetition it learned to bear his arm and allowed him to lay his whole weight on it, he proceeded as though in play to hoist a leg now and then on to its side, and he kept on at that until it found nothing odd in his pulling up his body after it little by little and hanging over its back for longer and longer at a time.

Then the day actually arrived when the horse without noticing any difference allowed him to sit right up and stay there; but then it is true he had talked to it as long and as sweetly as the south wind and summer days. But when he *sat* there and the horse still stood quietly under him, Wolf laughed, laughed only too well, his heart leapt in his breast for happiness.

Now the horse was to begin to walk with him, and he had to be very careful not to do anything to scare it. Afterwards, when besides walking it came to trotting and galloping, some of the difficulties were indeed transferred to himself; it was not directly in accordance with human nature to sit a horse in *all* dispensations; it had to be learnt. But as Wolf was very willing, and the horse had no objection, and there was time enough, it came quicker than he knew, and soon his younger brothers, yelling with admiration, could see the pair dashing at full gallop first round the paddock and then out on the steppe.

The first horseman, with a scrap of wolf's skin tied about his middle and his fiery hair flying about his ears, Wolf's red elf-locks that he used to dry his fingers in, always full of last year's burrs and affording shelter to all kinds of crawling things up to the size of a grasshopper; Wolf moulded in one with the wild horse, still

half striped like a zebra, its shoulders marked with the lightning, with a dumpy head like a foal all its days, and with the thunderbolt under each of its heart-shaped hoofs!

When Wolf had won the first victory, his brothers gradually followed his lead; each of them chose a pet among the foals and caressed it and hung upon its neck so long that they became confidential friends and united as one figure in the landscape, to the stupefaction, terror and disturbance of all other creatures. And this somewhat strained but never changing friendship, half based on deceit, half with the character of a providence, has since persisted between horse and man.

When once White Bear's boys were mounted it was not always easy to know where to find them, they almost showed a capacity for being in several places at once. White Bear covered the ground pretty well in his jolting two-wheeled car, but as for keeping up with the boys, it was not to be thought of. The daily hunt took on a new, undreamt-of pace: the sons rounded up the game and made dashing inroads where before they had had to get within spear range by a long and troublesome creeping, taking cover and making detours. A new age was latent in what the boys had originally hit upon quite aimlessly.

Meanwhile they were growing up. Wolf had begun to detach himself from his brothers, not that there was any disagreement between them, but because he had changed. His voice was now deep and hoarse; at one time he would be very serious and would then join his father, skilfully chipping and hammering at the ship, at another he would go back to games and larks wth his younger brothers and sisters, but he easily got wild so that they could not make him out, and was apt to break off the game by some exuberant vagary.

It was Wolf and yet it wasn't he. Sometimes he would be subject to fits of laughter, when he would seize an unfortunate calf and roll about with it in his arms till it

was scared out of its wits, or he embraced the first inanimate thing he could get hold of, a tree or a rock, howling with laughter; he threw himself on the ground with outstretched arms, trying to embrace the whole country; he jumped into the sea with a big stone clasped affectionately to his heart, took it to the bottom with him and then came up again sorrowing and alone. He had fits of mighty generosity, when he presented his delighted brothers and sisters with all his possessions, still treasures to them, to him wretched toys. At other times he would begin the hunt in high spirits and work himself into brutal cruelty; then he slew without mercy, exposed his life in cold blood; on days like this he went out alone against the wild boar or the great elk armed with nothing but an axe and came back from the fight shaking with a rage which the death of the beast by his hand had not sufficed to quench.

If any one had sought the explanation of Wolf's state of mind in the time of year, he would have found that it was the spring, whatever that may have had to do with it; but Wolf had of course been through other springs without being half beside himself. Had he been bewitched?

Spring came with some force in Lifeland, it set in with surging wet east winds and warm nights, the steppes threw off their snow and lay bare as far as the eye could reach, with open blue-black pools here and there in the grass. The water sank rapidly as soon as the ground was thawed, and in a few days the new grass made the country green far and wide. Birds of passage filled the night with a vague whistling, and suddenly everything was ready for the great spring festival: trees in leaf with resinous scent, the song of birds and the dreamy music of frogs in the light evenings, the capercailzie's crowing tryst in the birch copse, and the horrid nocturnal miaowing of the predatory beasts of the steppes in distress of love.

And the wild horses were there, the real ones from the

steppes. The first herd was sighted one clear day, immensely far off, like a dot on the horizon just under the sunrise; afterwards more came every night, and soon the steppe swarmed with their herds as usual in springtime.

There was unrest in the enclosure among the half-tame horses. The old mares were foaling at this time, and the stallions parted company, each with his own group of young mares, and fought furious battles, in which they reared and bit and scattered foam like a landward gale and their neighing could be heard far off in the magic stillness of the night. The horses felt their confinement and often went up to the edge of the ditch and stood there nodding, reflected in the water, with long looks eastward over the steppe; but there was no help for it, the ditch was their boundary and there they had to stay. When it chanced that a group of the free steppe horses passed near, the captives showed their distress, you could see them leap in the air where they stood and turn about with their necks stretched to the utmost, as if they were trying to fly straight up and away to their wild kin. Alas, there was a ditch between that kept them back. . . .

But not the horses from the steppes! One night several wild stallions leaped the ditch into the enclosure. What had never occurred to the captives the free animals did without a thought, they jumped the ditch. There was a terrific battle that night in the enclosure, the horses roaring and the ground thundering, and next day when the boys came to fetch their horses they found that the wild strangers had driven all the stallions into a corner and had divided the mares among themselves in friendly fashion. The defeated stood in stooping, broken attitudes, badly bitten, but the victors, who were nevertheless far fewer in numbers, trotted with proud gestures of the neck and great swishes of the tail round their many new obedient mares, now and then glancing with bloodshot eyes at

those they had ousted, but otherwise fully taken up with provisionally reviewing one by one the additions to their herd.

Wolf flew into a passion when he saw all this horse presumption; with a death-defying howl he plunged forward in great leaps and before his brothers grasped his intention they saw him fling himself at one of the wild stallions, dodge it behind a tree, dash for its mane and swing himself on to its back in one great flying leap . . . and instantly the horse bolted with him! Running away was its everyday business, but now that it felt somebody on its back clinging fast with two muscular legs and with heels planted in its stifles, its soul was all thunder and lightning, and with snorts and explosions it made like a streak for the steppe in tearing flight——

*The ditch!* The brothers hold their breath in almost unbearable excitement when they see the wild horse dash straight for it in blind career; now—*over*—they see Wolf hang a long moment in the air and dangle with his head in his stomach as the horse lands on the other side, but he sticks on, and now the horse picks itself up and gallops on towards the open country, mad with terror, still with Wolf on its back. Horse and rider were already so far away that the brothers were beginning to feel a grip at the heart on Wolf's account, when they saw him deliberately throw himself on to the steppe and roll over and over in the grass in a fairly break-neck fashion, while the horse continued its senseless flight. The brothers breathed again, they knew how much Wolf could stand in the way of falling off. And presently he came back quite calmly, feigning complete indifference for the benefit of his prostrate brothers; he was bleeding at the nose and blowing like a bellows, as though his ribs were trying to creep out through his skin, but otherwise he was of course the man; and now he knew that even the untamed wild horse could not throw him.

It was clear that Wolf was the one great horsebreaker, and his brothers, who for that matter had become good enough horsemen, never tried to rival him, but regarded his mastership with cheerful disinterestedness; he was the eldest and the first to have the idea, and what a man starts from the beginning ought to be left to him. And in fact the horse was to be Wolf's destiny, and that of the people which sprang from him. The germ of a nation lay in his blood; that was what had made him so restless, full of a tempestous craving to perish, with or for something, and yet with the feeling that he could not die.

Meanwhile the ice broke up along the coast, and White Bear and all his sons were busy with navigation and new, improved ships. Thus the summer went by in a fever of work and tossing on the sea.

In the autumn Wolf disappeared.

His brothers tried to keep it quiet, but when their father pressed them and insisted on knowing what had happened, they could only explain that Wolf had gone with the wild horses. That was all they knew.

The truth about Wolf was that he had grown melancholy in the autumn, when the steppes withered and all the birds of passage were preparing to leave. Even the sun had no abiding place, it rose farther and farther to the south and crept low in the sky to go early to rest; it was already far away and would seek yet more distant paths. But the days were so clear, the steppe lay in a cool farewell light which made each withered blade of grass rise up in the tranquil air, no longer green but strangely luminous and sorrowful. The buzzing of a single belated bee was heard brokenly from place to place, where it still found a lingering flower. The flocks of birds, darting in and out, up and down, as they practised their flight, could be heard miles away on those still days. High up in the transparent sky gossamer threads sailed giddily and drew off, the wild

geese drew off in the moonlight, the summer drew off, *memory* drew off, all things drew and drew away.

But when even the wild horses were gone, when herd after herd broke up and made for the east and the south, until they were only visible as a misty speck, now swelling out and getting bigger, now contracting again, as the horses, indistinguishable singly, joined or left the herd; when at last the speck disappeared immensely far out and finally vanished beyond the edge of the world, then Wolf thought his heart would burst his throat to follow them. He wept over their tracks abandoned in the earth, the last ones; the loss of them, the steppes now so deserted, and the thought of their distant world, over where the sun came from, caught him chokingly in the throat, he could not draw breath for pain. It hurt him so to think that that tiny faint cloud of dust far, far away was the herd, how they were now trotting close to one another, the old leader in front, the mares in foal in the middle and the young stallions outside as a protection. How he knew them. There were always some in the herd who ran in pairs, two friends who once for all had looked each other out and were not happy unless they ran together. Horse friendship! And they had no hands to give each other, only a horny hoof, they could not say anything, but who could tell the deepfelt joy of laying one's head across another's neck; was it not enough to feel the warmth of each other's skin while travelling side by side? Ah, no warmth and no smell is so sweet as the horse's! Wolf did not know what was happening to him. Something must be done; he wanted to dig himself into the earth with his hands, he ran round and round himself, shaking his head violently, for if he stood still in one spot and felt all his longing, he could not live.

In general Wolf hated emotions and being touched, he preferred to give himself vent in some mischievous prank

or other, which at any rate made him less ashamed; but now he felt that nothing but a mad act, a leap into the fire, could bring him relief. Then one day chance and impulse came pat. One of the last herds of wild horses had just started on the way to the south-east, trotting in a compact body, and Wolf lay out on the steppe behind a bush, following their movements. The leader, the strongest steed of all, was at their head, and suddenly Wolf saw him make straight for the bush, he would have to pass quite close to him; he turned giddy, and then did what he knew by an inner flash had been in his mind all the time; he gathered all his strength and dexterity as the horse came past, jumped up just as it discovered him and reared to throw itself around; Wolf, without knowing how, got alongside it, felt its mane in his hand and kept up in two or three long leaps, until he stamped on the ground for the last time and swung himself up. And there he sat as he had dreamt!

A couple of his brothers saw him disappear, from another part of the steppe; they saw him settled in his seat as though grown fast to the horse, which was tearing at a mad gallop towards the horizon, with the herd behind it in a cloud of dust. In a few minutes Wolf and the wild horse were away behind the curve of the earth. The brothers knew that Wolf had done what he had to do, even though they did not yet understand him. They did not expect to see him come back on foot.

White Bear had his own ideas and was not alarmed for his firstborn. But when some weeks had passed without Wolf returning and May was mourning for him, White Bear made up his mind to drive a couple of days' journey to the south and seek news among the nomadic Badgers who pitched their tents here and there in the interior. Oh yes, they knew all about his son. He was living somewhere a long way off to the eastward with a beautiful girl—the

Badgers had good reason to know it, since she came of their people and Wolf had stolen her in broad daylight; a thing, they respectfully suggested, for which compensation was due, and no doubt the Chief would be ready to settle the matter on his son's behalf. For the rest the two young people were carrying on like simple fools; they had cut themselves off and lived on distant pastures with the wild horses, it was said, and chiefly on mare's milk! Ay, you hear strange things. Nobody could feel safe for him, for he had the crazy habit of getting on to the beasts and tearing about all over the place with them, and if he wanted anything he came flying along on the back of some wild creature and fetched it, no matter *whose* it was. Some people would have it he was a downright supernatural being, made like a horse with four legs below and like a man above, but they'd have to take that story further across the steppes, for here they had seen him get off; and he must have human tastes too, to run off with a woman. *She*, by the way, seemed to be just as cracked as her man, she climbed up on to the dumb beasts and followed him in all his jaunts. But, they added, with eyes aslant, if such a Chief could own to a regrettable offspring, what was to prevent a Badger claiming a mad flighty creature as his bantling? . . .

White Bear thanked them for the information and went home again. Well, well, so Wolf had done the impossible again! Ay, every new generation had its own ways, it must be hoped. In his own mind White Bear did not deny that the boy's exploit displeased him; he regarded the natives with pity rather than with anything like respect and had never dreamt of being mixed up with the riffraff in this way. But what could he say, when the immigrant White Bear family were the only whites in Lifeland and there were thus no other women to be had? There was nothing to be done but to let Wolf act for himself and take

the consequences. May was inconsolable; that she herself had once run away with White Bear did not make the misfortune any less. Wolf was lost to the home.

In the course of the winter he came home unexpectedly, in a sledge drawn by two, splendid, fiery, well-broken horses. The sledge was laden with frozen reindeer carcasses, which he carried into his mother's store room, just as in the old days when he came home from hunting; but she thanked him as for a present. There was great joy at the meeting, but no one showed any surprise either at Wolf's absence or at his reappearance, and no questions were asked. His brothers found him unaltered, except that he had grown a beard, which unfortunately could not be seen properly because it was so fair, and which Wolf therefore blackened in secret with soot from the fire. His eyes had got hollow and he was pretty gruff but heartily pleased with himself. In spite of his thinness he astonished his brothers with proofs of immense newly acquired strength and accomplishments. Of the rest of his adventures and the mysterious world away in the wilds which he had made his own, not a word was said. He only stayed a couple of days and then went off again to the eastward where he had come from, on the empty sledge behind the two beautiful horses in a stretching gallop.

But at his leave-taking the old man had let fall a remark to the effect that travelling was better fun when you were two and hadn't to feel anxiety about the one you left behind, and Wolf had nodded as one who is his own master but is not above taking advice.

And now it was over a year before they saw any more of him. Then he came on a visit and this time he brought his whole world with him. It proved to consist of an immense herd of horses, Wolf had no idea himself how many, though he knew each one of them. They were not exactly tame, but were kept together and looked after with or without their consent by Wolf always riding round them,

giving the herd the direction he wanted and preventing any of them from straying. In this he was helped by his wife, whom his family at last had a sight of.

Her name had a sudden, explosive sound—*Tchu*—and not without reason; she was like the whirlwind over the steppe, swishing along with joyful shout; she was as daring as Wolf in clinging to a horse's back, full of fire and with seven lives in her, lithe and gentle as a kitten. If the White Bear family were blond and fair of skin like rain on the icefield, she was as brown as the sunburnt, cloudless steppe, with the blackest hair in the world. Her eyes, which lay quite flat in her face, were dark as old honey; she was not pretty, but tingling with life, her small limbs agile as a squirrel, but with a strength in her teeth that was marvellous to see; if anything had to be held and her hands were busy, she snapped her mouth on it, and when she had got a firm bite she would hold on with all her weight, even to being dragged after a horse; she was all grip and energy with a careless smile to boot, wiry and full of laughter from top to toe. In a skin bag on her back she carried a baby, which was nicely jolted when she was on horseback for days at a time and which got the galloping rhythm into its blood only too early. May took the bag by its corners and shook the youngster out to have a look at it, and it proved to be doing splendidly and took more after its mother, swarthy and flat in the face; but it had Wolf's blue eyes and his hands. And when it stretched them out to Grandmother, she instantly raised an altar in her heart to the new idol.

The family, however, were only passing by with their herd, with which they were always changing pastures. It was all the property they had, besides a little tent of hides in which they slept at night. As to their food, they kept to mare's milk, for which they had acquired a taste once for all in the first sweet crazy days of their exile. All things that are new and that endure have their origin in

love. This is what White Bear guessed, and thus Wolf's curious taste was approved.

They roamed about for a few years with the horses, but when both these and their masters had quieted down through mutual familiarity, Wolf founded a settlement on the coast in the neighbourhood of his father's and continued his horse-breeding there with a fixed establishment.

From Wolf's and Tchu's progeny are descended the restless horsemen of Asia with an equal share of North and South in their veins; the kumiss-drinking tent-dwellers, all the free nomads of the steppes, who go galloping through the centuries.

But from the wild horse, which followed White Bear back to Upland and afterwards made the circuit of Europe in his son's ships, came the warhorse, which made its owner, the knight, the cavalier, master of the world. From it came also the peasant's faithful draft-horse, drawing the plough for the corn, that itself and many more might live.

In memory of the mettlesome steed that bore Wolf and Tchu to lawless wastes where they learned to dwell in each other's vital warmth, like two horses that will always go in a pair flank to flank, in its undying memory there shines a constellation in the sky.

The soul of the wild horse lives in the legend of Pegasus. Eternal youth, fore-time and all-time, is in the rush of his wings; but it is not he that has borne me; I have my myth from home, from the *Hell Horse.*

Yes, from the Hell Horse, the old Danes' friend in war and peace and favourite food; the sacrificial victim before all others, which they dedicated to their ancestors and ate with faces devoutly smeared with its blood. Later, when our fathers were persuaded to honour another origin than their own and were prescribed the lamb as the only sacrificial food with power to save, the horse was forbidden as unclean—the horse!—and buried alive under the thresh-

old of the new house of God. Here it arose as the spectral Hell Horse, oh, ho, ho, and they say that whoso looks upon its ghost must die. Can it be so dangerous as that?

From a ride on the Hell Horse, a glorious devilish gallop in company with the dead through the Lost Country —from that I have my myth.

## XIX

### THE LARK

SWAIN was a seafaring man, he came in his ship to a land which almost made one with the sea and consisted of many low islands with fjords and sounds between. In one of these fjords he lost his way and ran on for so long among headlands, broads and islands that he came to like the country.

It rose gently above the sea with miles of low, fleeting slopes, strewed with gravel and boulders, new-born with a fresh scent of rain as though just left bare by the ice. Swain went ashore and found the beach friendly, covered with the finest sand and edged at the break of the waves with a mass of round pebbles of every hue, which rattled cheerfully against each other; the grass came right down to the blue sea. Inland were rich meadows and marshes, bright young woods and wide heaths between. Splendid game moved everywhere and the fjord, fed by streams which flowed between flowery banks with dimples in their sluggish course, was flashing with fish. The sky stood mightily above this land which scarcely showed in the sea, with swelling worlds of cloud and shafts of light slanting down from the hidden sun.

Swain sailed to other parts, but he did not forget this low-lying country and he came back. Then it was early spring with chilly winds. The showers came and went with a homely industry all their own; there was nobody to keep them up to it, but they got it done just the same.

Away in the grey fields stood horsetails that had shot up

beside the molehills like thin skeleton fingers. In the mould, which sucked and oozed beneath the sun, lay little stones like wet eyes, and in the pale grass were yellow flowers with musty stalks. The southern slopes were green with new growth, where rare and fragile pansies peeped up like tiny faces blue with cold.

Shadows of the clouds travelled and travelled over the moist meadows, now it darkened about one, and now the sun broke through imperiously, wooing the earth, expanded like a wheel, shed fire over the world and was gone again. The shadows breathed over the land like the ghost of a wandering sea, they ran up over the hills, pursuing one another, chased by the wet wind that smelt so pregnantly of earth.

But up in the restless sky, where the clouds cast gloom and the sunshine sported, warm to the eyelids, the lark hovered, singing.

Slowly, drunkenly, it went up, now in light and now in shadow, singing unceasingly, be, be—bebebe—be, be, until, caught up in the rapture that was simply its own heart swelling with the air it drank in, it rose so high, straight up, that light and clouds swallowed it, and it was as though the moist air itself sang over the fields, where springs gushed clear and bubbling from the naked mould.

And the nights grew warm. The toads sat to their necks in water and croaked like little trolls in the rushes, where the afterglow lay in the still barren water. Down at the bottom the black, twisted roots of the sweet flag shot out their green claws; the willows clothed their buds with white fur against any whim of the weather. Birds of passage were on the way, everywhere was growth.

But Swain had hearkened to the lark and determined to stay. Here was the place to rear his children, that they might one day possess the land. It was afterwards called Denmark. Swain settled at the inmost end of a sheltered

fjord by the outlet of a river. Up through the valley lay bogs and woods, and above it on the long hills began the heath.

As soon as Swain's children could crawl they lay out in the heather with their fair mops of hair and made themselves acquainted with the things of this world. They crept up to the big grey stones that lay scattered singly, each with its own particular look, or in sociable crowds about the heath, and would post themselves in front of some silent mightiness and wait for further signs of life, themselves quite reticent the while. They put out the end of a very little finger to the juniper bush, which stood domed and bellied but headless among the heather, and when they found that it pricked they did not come there any more.

But with other things they soon made friends; with the heather itself that stood like a tree of iron with scaly roses at every branch; with the evergreen leaves of the whortleberry, shaped like little boats, and the bog myrtle that bore whole flocks and herds of fine and wild-smelling cones. The broom blossomed like fire and then put out black pods that looked like swords which had been scorched and might just as well have been a yard long and hung from the top of a big tree. The mottled orchis stood apart in the heather with its plantain stem, the lycopodium crept in the rough carpet of lichen under the heather and sent up long shoots here and there to keep a look out, the most childish of trees, pale green all over.

The children had never been told that all these weather-beaten plants had once been tropical trees in a forest that formerly stood in the same spot, but they knew it quite well in their hearts. By the taste of a sprig of heather they knew that it came of a great family and from a warm place, it left a balmy and bitter taste in the mouth. They could tell that the juniper bush had seen better days.

And they loved to pretend that the sedge reached up to the sky like a palm with smooth, ribbed fruit as big as loaves.

On warm summer days, when the grasshopper's pse, pse was heard everywhere and nowhere in the heather like a gasping breath, an airy mirage of groves and lakes would rise over the heath; the children could plainly distinguish giant trees up there and found a great forest in the air perfectly natural.

In the light nights they would wake and fall to thinking of their round pebbles which lay in their pens like cattle up on the heath and must be feeling lonely. They would raise their heads and look out into the light night, and the second sight of the half-waking child's mind would see a vision, a glimpse of a wonder of the past, when the tropical forest of the North once spread beneath light nights. Childhood, that is the Lost Country.

Here ends the myth of Carl.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

A few words may be said about the names in this book, some of which have been translated and others retained in their original Danish form. The aim has been to preserve as far as possible the effect of the original, without being bound by any hard and fast rule.

The name of Fyr, the Prometheus of the Forest Folk, is one of the Danish words for *fire*, but it has also come to mean a fiery, impetuous fellow.

Carl is called in the original *Dreng*, but our word Boy scarcely describes him; his story shows him to have been "a stout carl." And he will of course be recognized as the one-eyed Allfather of Northern mythology, whose chariot, the Carl's wain, is conspicuous in our sky.

Mam, as the text shows, was named by her children with the first syllable they could utter; in the Danish she is Moa.

Firegrim is a translation of the Danish Ildgrim.

Vaar (Spring) is the original name of May.

Other names are literal translations.

I take the opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to the author for much useful criticism and assistance while the translation was in progress.

A. G. C.

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